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S Y S T E M

PRACTICAL DUTIES

MORAL and EVANGELICAL

BY THE
REV. THOMAS STOKER

OF THE KING'S COLLEGE, LONDON.

LONDON: Printed and Sold by J. JOHNSON, in Pall-mall.

REVISED BY
CHRISTOPHER DOUGLASS

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BY THE
K
Rev. THOMAS STACKHOUSE, A.M.
Late Vicar of Beenham, in Berkshire.

REVISED and CORRECTED.



L O N D O N :

Printed for J. HINTON, at the King's Arms,
in Newgate-Street.

M.DCC.LX.

M E T S Y S

PRAGMATICAL DUTIES

ALABAMA

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

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1947-1948

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Trained for J. Hinton, at the King's Arms,
in Newgate Street.

M.D.C.LXXI

TO THE
R E A D E R.

THE Fifth Part of Mr. Stackhouse's Body of Divinity, concerning the great Precepts of Moral and Evangelical Righteousness, has been greatly esteemed for its Method, Brevity, and Perspicuity, and is essentially necessary to every Christian. It was thought therefore, that if this Part were published separately, it would not be unacceptable to the Publick ; as every one might then have an Opportunity of reading this excellent Treatise, and of purchasing it at an easy Rate.

CONFIDENTIAL

100

[The page contains faint, illegible markings and bleed-through from the reverse side.]

Between England and India
Between India and Europe
Between Europe and America
Between America and Africa
Between Africa and Asia
Between Asia and Australia
Between Australia and Oceania
Between Oceania and Antarctica

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INTRODUCTION.



IN treating of the Ten Commandments, the Author explained, in the former Part of his Work, the several Duties relating to God and our Neighbour, as far as the Purport of the negative Precepts would permit; and, in considering the various Attributes of God, took Notice of the several Duties that do properly result from thence, as far as was consistent with the Nature of the Subject, and the Brevity usually prescribed to Inferences.

The Business of this Treatise is to collect, what was before cursorily mentioned, into some tolerable Compass, to explain the great Precepts of Moral and Evangelical Righteousness, and to enforce the whole Duty of Man, as it respects God, his Neighbour, and himself.

But before he enters upon the Subject (as there are some People, who, for the Quiet of their own Minds, would cancel all Obligation to Duty, by decrying the Differences of Good and Evil, as tho' they were nothing but the arbitrary Fancies of Men, according to the different Influences of Custom or Education, as tho' doing well were nothing but a moral Fashion of appearing suitably to the

B

Country

ii INTRODUCTION.

Country wherein we live, which varies as much as the different Habits and Languages of Men do ; as there is a Set of Men in the World who solemnly advance such Positions as these) the Author judges it right to premise something concerning the moral and immutable Distinction of Good and Evil, of Virtue and Vice, thereby to prove, that our Obligations to the Practice of the one, and Avoidance of the other, is antecedent to any positive Command, either of God or Man.

That *Reason*, whether we consider it as a *Rule*, to *direct*, or as a *Law*, to *oblige* the Choice of intelligent Beings, ought to be the Measure of every Man's Actions, is readily granted ; but then the Question is, wherein Reason *consists*, and whether, in particular Cases, all Actions, setting aside *positive* Institution, be not equally reasonable ; whether, under certain Circumstances, for Instance, it be not equally agreeable to Reason, and consequently equally fitting and lawful, for a Man to commit any Act of Violence and Cruelty, or even to blaspheme, as it is to *do Justice*, or *love Mercy*, or *walk humbly with God*. Now, to set this Matter in a true Light, we will suppose Mankind in a *pure State of Nature*, a State where all Persons are absolutely *independent* ; where neither the Authority of Parents, nor any superior Force of Body, or Capacity of Mind can be pretended, to give one Man the least Power or Advantage over another ; in a Word, where there is *no Law*, and consequently, in a *political Sense*, there can be *no Transgression*, but every Man is equally permitted to do *what is right in his own Eyes*. Let us suppose farther, that, in this State of *Equality*, it is perfectly indifferent, as to a Man's Interest and Convenience, whether he lye, or speak Truth ; whether he be kind and obliging, or churlish and oppressive to his Neighbour ; whether, without any Provocation, he murder
ther

INTRODUCTION. iii

ther an innocent Men, or relieve him when in Danger of perishing : Yet I would ask, whether there is not something (in itself, and without Regard to any human *Compacts*) more agreeable in a Man's acting upon a Principle of Generosity and Good-nature, than in exerting an arbitrary Act of Violence and Cruelty? 'Tis a singular Instance of the Goodness, as well as Wisdom of God then, that he hath *implanted* in us a natural Tenderness towards one another under Circumstances of Distress, whereby we find ourselves invincibly moved, if not to *relieve*, at least to *compassionate* those, that are unfortunate ; and this Duty we properly enough stile *Humanity*, as if it were so *essential* to human Nature, that Men could not divest themselves of it, without degenerating into *Brutes* and *Savages*.

Some People indeed have so far divested themselves of it, as to entertain different Persuasions of Things. Among the *Cilicians*, Robbery was thought an indifferent Matter, as, among the *Lacedemonians*, *Theft* : Incestuous Marriages among the *Persians* were held innocent, and some other Acts of Uncleanness among the *Thebans* : But these Instances do not overthrow the *moral* Distinction of Good and Evil, because we do not deny that Men may degenerate in their Opinions as well as their Practices. There may be *Monsters* in *Morality*, as well as in *Nature* ; but, as these are to be no Rule for the whole *Species*, so neither can we suppose, that their Opinions would have been so much taken Notice of, had they not herein contradicted the Sense of the rest of Mankind. For, ever since there have been Men in the World, an infinite Difference has been placed between Virtue and Vice. The Name of *Virtue* has been appropriated to certain approved Actions, that have been praised and recommended by all the World ; and under the Name of *Vice* has been comprized every Thing that has been counted

iv INTRODUCTION.

worthy of Blame, and whereon Dishonour and Disgrace has been cast. This Distinction is so ancient, so uniform, so universal, that it cannot proceed from bare Education, but must have been the Gift of Nature ; because Nature, which is the same in all, gives to all the same Institution, and the same Light, and Men have nothing to do but to follow it. Her Voice is never fallacious ; and therefore, the Distinction, which she, in general, has set between Good and Evil, is not *arbitrary*, but founded in the *Things* themselves ; and so far from depending on any *positive* Laws, whether human or divine, that positive Laws themselves do *principally*, if not *solely* oblige, by Virtue of our pre-supposing this Distinction.

God, we conceive, is a Being infinitely Good, Wise, and Powerful ; but it is absurd to suppose, that he should have infinite *Power*, and we not be bound to *fear* him ; that he should have infinite *Goodness*, and we not be bound to love him ; that he should have infinite *Wisdom*, and we not be bound to *believe* in him, to *trust* in him, to *depend* upon him, and to *submit* to his holy Will and Pleasure. 'Tis impossible to conceive a *Creator*, giving Life, and all the Comforts of it, to a *Creature*, and he not obliged to be thankful to him, and to serve him ; and, if it be absurd *not* to serve God, it must, in Consequence, be a good Thing to perform, and an evil Thing to neglect our Duty to him. The Distinction therefore between Good and Evil, between Virtue and Vice, so far, at least, as God is concerned in them, is inherent in the Things themselves, and independent on any positive Law or Injunction, to make them so : And with these Observations we proceed now to the Consideration of some of the *principal* Duties we owe to our great Creator, beginning with those that are *internal*.

A
S Y S T E M
OF
PRACTICAL DUTIES
MORAL and EVANGELICAL.

C H A P. I.

Our Duty towards G O D.

S E C T. I.

Of the internal Duties we owe to God, and

I. O F L O V E.

HEAR, O Israel, says Moses their Ruler, commenting upon the Precepts, which God had been giving them, *The Lord our God is one Lord, and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Might; This, as our Saviour tells us, is the first and great Commandment.* And, in treating of it, we shall shew, I. Wherein our Love of God consists, and upon what Reasons and Considerations it becomes our Duty: And then, II. What its Properties and Qualifications are, and by what Means we may be enabled to attain it.

I. Now, to love God, is to possess our Minds with such a due Sense and Estimation of the Excellencies and Perfections which are in the Divine Nature, as may make us look upon God as *our chief Good*; make Choice of him as the only proper Object of our Happiness; and prefer his Cause and Interest before any Thing else that may come in Competition with it: For the Language of a true Friend and Lover of God is that of the Royal Psalmist, *Whom have I in Heaven but thee? And there is none upon Earth that I desire besides thee.* And, indeed, whether we consider God *absolutely*, as he is in himself, or *relatively*, as he shews himself to us, there is all the Reason imaginable, why he should be seated in the Throne of our Affections.

1. Absolutely, and in himself, God is proposed to us as the most lovely and amiable of all Beings, in whom there is an *harmonious* Concurrence of all Beauties and Perfections, and who has all the Excellencies that can possibly attract our Love, in infinite Degrees, concentered in his Nature. *Wisdom*, both the Ornament and Perfection of a Creature, is but a Spark of *Light*, fallen from the *Father of Lights*, and is to be found *originally* in him, who is *the only wise God*. *Power*, the Thing which is universally courted among Men, is fundamentally in him, *who hath made the Heaven, and the Heaven of Heavens, and who preserveth them still.* *Justice*, which makes the *righteous Man* more excellent than his Neighbour, is a glorious Attribute of his Godhead, who is *righteous in all his Ways, and holy in all his Works.* *Holiness*, a Thing so venerable among Men, the most orient Pearl, that they can shew, is but a faint Ray of that infinite Purity, which is in God. *Kindness* and *Benevolence*, which no Man ever hated, which wins upon all, is essential to him, who is the Fountain of all Good,
and

and whose Mercy endureth for ever. And, to name no more, *Beauty*, that common Allurement of Love, is so conspicuous in him, that the most glorious Inhabitants of Heaven, who see his Face, are dazzled with the Glory of it : For the Seraphims, in *Isaiab's* Vision, appear covering their Faces in the Presence of God, either as blushing at their own comparative Deformity, or as unable to sustain the resplendent Lustre of the Divine Perfections. If then we deservedly love and esteem those Persons, who are possessed of those Graces, tho' in an imperfect Degree ; how can we but love and reverence God, who is the glorious Center, in whom all these Excellencies meet ; in whom perfect Wisdom and unerring Justice, melting Goodness, and alluring Mercy, are all united to captivate our Affections ? Especially considering,

2. That, besides these essential Qualities in God, we have abundant Reason to love him, in his relative Capacity, for the daily Emanations of his Goodness to us. At first he produced us out of nothing, and made us thereby capable of receiving all Kindnesses from him. Our Existence could be no Addition to his Happiness, and therefore our Creation was the mere Effect of his eternal Love. The same *Philantrophy* still sustains and preserves us, and keeps us from relapsing into the Abyss of Non-Entity. The Divine Providence continually watches over us, screens us from Dangers, and confers on us actual Favours and Mercies : And, therefore, if we think ourselves bound to love our Friends and Benefactors, or Parents and dearest Relations, there is much greater Reason to love God, whose Kindness to us far exceeds all the Care and Affection of the most entire Friend, of the most indulgent Parent. But, of all the Instances of his Love, that of sending his Son, for the *Redemption* of Mankind, is of the most endearing Nature. With

what a Variety of tender Expressions does the Apostle describe this great Act! *God, who is rich in Mercy, says he, for his great Love, wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in Sins; bath quickened us together with Christ, (by Grace ye are saved) and bath raised us up together, and bath made us sit together in heavenly Places, in Christ Jesus: That, in the Age to come, he might shew the exceeding Riches of his Grace, in his Kindness to us, through Christ Jesus; for by Grace are ye saved, through Faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the Gift of God. Here is Grace, and Gift, and Kindness, exceeding Riches of Grace, and great Love, and Riches of Mercy, and these, if duly attended to, cannot fail, one would think, of kindling a reciprocal Flame of Love in our Hearts; which is therefore more peculiarly due to God; because,*

3. Himself is the only Author and Cause of this Affection in us. That we have a Bias in our Natures, inclining to what is good in general, and which the Soul can no more controul, than she can the Motion of the Heart or Pulse, is obvious to any one, that observes his own particular Make and Constitution. Now, if there is such an Impression in our Nature, we may ask the Question, whether it is from ourselves, or from God. If *from ourselves*, how comes it to pass, that we cannot command or stop it? Were we the Authors of this Motion, we should certainly have Power over it, and be able to manage and restrain it, as we saw fit: But, since we cannot do this, we may well conclude, that it is not a Thing of our own Production; and, if not of our own Production, then certainly it came from God, for who should be the Author of what is natural and necessary in us, but he that is the Author of our Nature itself? *Love* is the same in the *moral* and *intellectual* World, that *Motion* is in the *natural*; and, as we make God to be the Author

Our Duty towards God.

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thor of natural Motion, so there is as much Reason to esteem him the Author of our Love. But, now, if God be the Author and Cause of our Love, he, doubtless, has an absolute Right and Title to it. For, what is it that gives him a Right to the whole World, but his Production of it? Why has he a Right to any of us, but because we are his Creatures? Why a Right to all our Powers and Faculties, and to all the Service of them, but because he produces and sustains them; because *in him we live, move, and have our Being*? But, now, if God does as much produce our Love, as he does our *Being*, then has he the same Right to our Love, that he has to any Part of our Nature, and 'tis an Injury and Injustice done him, whenever we transfer it, in any great Degree, to any other Object; since *to love God with all our Hearts, &c.* cannot but imply thus much, that we love him in a peculiar and superlative Manner, in a Manner, wherein we must not love any Thing besides. Our Friends and Relations, our Neighbours and Acquaintance, may have some Share of our Love and Esteem, but nothing must be loved above God, nothing equally with God, much less contrary to, and against him; nothing must have the Heart so entirely as he, and nothing, that opposes him, must have it at all; seeing God is to be loved *principally*, and for himself; other Things only *secondarily*, and in Subordination to him.

II. How then shall we resolve ourselves in this great and important Question, *whether we love God in the Manner we ought to do*? Why, we must attend to the genuine *Fruits* and *Properties* of human Love, and thence make the Estimate of the Nature of our Love towards God. Now,

I. Every Man thinks him *lovely* whom he loves; and what he esteems in another, he wishes to be possessed of himself, that so, becoming like unto him,

him, he may appear as lovely in the Eyes of his beloved, as his beloved does in his. And, in like Manner, if we love God, we must necessarily esteem him exceeding lovely and endearing, and, under this Esteem, must be naturally led to resemble him in all those amiable Qualities, that so much endear him to us. Did we love him indeed for his *Eternity*, or his *Power*, or his *Immensity*, we might wish to be like him, but all in vain; because, in these Perfections, we are not capable of imitating him: But the Beauties, for which we love him, are his *Goodness*, and *Wisdom*, and *Righteousness*, and *Mercy*, &c. all which are Matter of our Imitation, and may be transcribed into our Natures. So that, if we love God, we cannot but desire to resemble him in those Things, for which we love him; and, these being all of an *imitable* Nature, our Desire of resembling him will provoke our best Endeavours to be *pure*, as he is *pure*; *just*, as he is *just*; and *merciful*, as he is *merciful*.

2. The greatest Ambition of Love is, to appear amiable in the Eyes of its beloved; and, that it may do so, it studiously avoids whatever may be displeasing or distasteful, and endeavours to adorn itself with such sweet Graces, as may endear and recommend itself to the Object beloved. And so, if we love God, we cannot but desire to appear lovely to him, and that Desire, if it be sincere, must necessarily engage us to acquire whatever is pleasing, and to avoid whatever is hateful in his Sight. Now Virtue and true Goodness are the only Beauties that endear us to God; as, on the contrary, Sin and Wickedness are the only Deformities, for which he detests us: And therefore, as we would approve our Love to God, we must flee from Sin, and from every Appearance of Evil, lest they turn away his Eyes from us; and, to conciliate his good Graces, give all Diligence to add to our Faith, Virtue; and to
Virtue,

Virtue, Knowledge; and to Knowledge, Godliness; and to Godliness, Brotherly-Kindness, &c. for if these Things be in us, and abound, they will make us acceptable to God, as being Partakers of the Divine Nature.

3. Again: Nothing is more uneasy, than the Mind of a Lover, when separated from the Object of his Affections. His Thoughts, his Dreams, his Wishes, and Desires run continually upon it; nor can he recover his Ease and Tranquillity, till he is happily restored to his former Enjoyment. And, in like Manner, when God, for the Trial of our Faith or Patience, *hides his Face from us* for a Season, either with-holding from us that ready Aid in Distress, or Comfort in our Obedience, or Pleasure in our Devotion, which we formerly experienced; if Love reside in our Hearts, it will surely dispose them to sensible Grief, and inspire them with such ardent Petitions as these; *Hide not thy Face from thy Servant; for I am in Trouble: Turn unto me, according to the Multitude of thy Mercies, and draw nigh unto my Soul, and save it.* But especially, when *our Iniquities*, as the Prophet expresses it, *have separated between our God and us, and our Sins have hid his Face from us*; when that thick Cloud hath eclipsed the Light of his Countenance, and intercepted his gracious Influences; then, if any Love be alive in our Breasts, it will prompt us, with the good Men of old, in their penitential Agonies, sorely to bewail our wretched Condition. There will be *no Soundness in our Flesh, nor Rest in our Bones; our Spirit will be overwhelmed within us, and our Heart within us desolate*, till, by an humble Deprecation, we have regained some Glimpse of God's Favour, and are in Hopes of being re-instated in our Possession of him.

4. Once more. Love is a bold and active Passion, which warms and animates the Heart with
such

such a generous Fire, as disdains all Opposition, and out-braves the greatest Dangers and Difficulties. If therefore we love God *sincerely*, our Love will quicken our Endeavours to serve him, and carry us, with such a Spirit and Alacrity, through all the weary Stages of our Duty, that it will be our Joy and Recreation to do his Will. The more Difficulties we meet with in our Way, the more will they whet our Activity, as being proper Opportunities to manifest the Sincerity of our Love, and thereby to recommend our Services to our Beloved. And in this Sense I conceive these Words of St *John*, *herein is our Love made perfect, i. e.* this will try the Perfection of our Love to God, namely, *that we may have Boldness in the Day of Judgment, i. e.* that, in the Time of Danger, when we are brought before Rulers and Judges, and are in Peril of losing our Lives for the Cause of *Christ*, we then manfully confess him, and seal the Truth of our Testimony with the Price of our Blood.

These are the *genuine* Signs and Properties of the Love of God in our Hearts: And from hence we may observe the great Mistake, that several Persons may lie under, in their Computation of this Matter; such, I mean, as measure their Affection to God by the mere Impression of *sensitive* Passion; who, because, upon some affecting *Representations* of his amiable Perfections, they feel in themselves the same Emotions they were wont to do, when they fall in Love with other Things, do instantly conclude, that they are infinitely in Love with God: Whereas all this is, many Times, nothing else, but the Effect of a sanguine Complexion, tinctured and inflamed with religious Ideas, which is the most distant Thing imaginable from the Virtue of Divine Love. For, as there are sincerely good Men, that cannot raise their *sensitive* Passions in their religious Offices; that are heartily sorry
for

for their Sins, and yet cannot weep for them; and do entirely love God, and delight in his Service, and yet cannot move their Blood and Spirits into the ravishing Transports of Love and Joy; so are there many gross Hypocrites, that have not the least Tincture of true Piety, who yet, in their religious Exercises, can put themselves into wonderful *Extasies* of bodily Passion; can pour out their Confessions in Floods of Tears, and make their Hearts dilate into Raptures of Love and Joy: And yet, all the while, this is no more than the different Temper of Mens Bodies, which in some is calm and sedate, and not easily to be disturbed; in others is soft and tender, and so very susceptible of Impression, that any frivolous Fancy can raise a Commotion in them. Unless therefore we are minded to deceive ourselves in this important Affair, we must not trust to such fallacious Evidences as these, but try our Love to God by his own Touchstone, *viz.* by our Obedience to his heavenly Will; for so himself hath instructed us, *ye are my Friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you; for he that hath my Commandments, and keepeth them, he it is, that loveth me.*

How then shall we raise in our Minds this Affection, and by what Means shall we improve and cultivate the Love of God in our Hearts? The Apostle has directed us to the proper Method; *love not the World, neither the Things which are in the World; for, if any Man love the World, the Love of the Father is not in him.* We must therefore call home our roving Appetites, which run gadding abroad after worldly Objects, fondly pursuing every Shadow and Phantom of Pleasure, that they meet with: This Love of ours, I say, which runs out into so many little Streams, and is dispersed among so many Objects in the visible World, we must collect together, and cast into one great Channel, and
let

let it flow in one great Tide towards God. And indeed, how can we reflect upon the Beauties of his Nature, his Goodness, and Justice, and Mercy; &c. without being charmed and captivated with the Love of them? How can we think of the stupendous Love, which he hath expressed towards us, in giving us our Being, and all the Blessings we enjoy, in preparing an Heaven of immortal Joys for us, and sending his Son from thence, to conduct us thither, without being all inflamed with Love to him? Our Business therefore must be, to set ourselves seriously to the Contemplation of God, of the Loveliness of his Nature, and of his infinite Kindness to us, and to all his Creation; to be constant and diligent in Prayer and Supplication, in praising him, and celebrating the Memory of his Mercies, in consulting the Scriptures, hearing the Word, and attending to all other religious Offices and Employments; for in these the God of Heaven communicates himself, and by these Divine Love is infused into the Soul.

2. Of Delight in God.

TO delight in God, is to possess our Minds with such a proper Sense of his *Goodness*, as may produce an habitual Comfort and Pleasure in the Contemplation of him; as may excite us to Diligence and Alacrity in his Worship and Service; to approach his Altars with Joy and Thanksgiving; to hear his Word with Reverence and Attention; to converse with him *here* in Meditation and Prayer; and to long to enjoy what his *beatific* Presence imparts *hereafter*. This is the Duty. And our Business must be, 1. To point out the *Reasonableness* and *Expediency* of it; and then, 2. To observe by what *Means* we may be enabled to perform it.

I. Now

I. Now all the delectable Things in Nature, which we either know or can imagine, are but of three Kinds, *Natural*, *Moral*, and *Heavenly*. In the first consist the Pleasures of the World; in the second the Pleasures of the *Godly*; and in the third the Pleasures of the *Blessed*: And, to evince the Reasonableness of our delighting in God, we shall separately observe how each of these directs us to God, as an Object much more deserving of our Affections and Complacency.

1. Wonderful is the Variety of the Things in Nature, that are accommodated to our Liking, and their Power of pleasing us is but too manifest from the strange Ascendant they have over our Affections: And yet all these Things do naturally lead us to something better, and more satisfying, as we must needs acknowledge, whenever we reflect on their *transient* and empty Nature, and how, by Reason either of their *offensive* Mixtures, or *necessary* Decay, they leave our Souls lean and pining in the very Midst of their Enjoyments. This is the Thing, which, to confirm our Experience, God himself has been pleased to signify to us, when he complains of his People, that *they had forsaken him, the Fountain of living Water, and had brewed to themselves Cisterns, broken Cisterns, that could hold no Water*: For, by comparing himself to a *Fountain of living Water*, he plainly intimates, that he is the *Source* of solid Refreshment, of sincere and lasting Delectation, such as is adequate to the Desires of our Soul; and by comparing all worldly Enjoyments to *broken Cisterns, that can hold no Water*, he likewise intimates how vain and imperfect they are, how transient, uncertain, and unsatisfactory.

Nor are they only deceitful in their Use, and unsatisfying in their Nature, but are likewise unable to serve us, when we have most Need of them, in the Bitterness of Affliction, in the Destitutions
of

of the Soul ; whereas a spiritual Commerce with God, which creates a sure Confidence in him, is a steady Enjoyment, which no Accident can impair, *which, in the Multitude of Sorrows, will refresh us with Comforts*, and, as holy *Job* expresses it, *give us Songs in the Night*, i. e. give us Consolation in the Night of Affliction, and in the Gloominess of human Despair. Complain therefore we may of the Vanity and Emptiness of all worldly Joys ; but, at the same Time, we ought to remember what the Prophet tells us, *viz. that it is from the Lord that they are so*, viz. that he has purposely designed, that the good Things of this Life should not be *satisfying*, nor able to answer that earnest Desire of Happiness, which he hath made con-natural to the Soul of Man, with an Intent to teach us, that he intended to fill up the Measure of our Desires, and to be himself the *Delight*, we so much long for.

2. Moral Delight is that, which springs from the Conscience of Well-doing, of which, though the Wicked are not utterly insensible, (because it is often felt to arise from any single and *casual* Act of Virtue) yet are its Refreshments, in a peculiar Manner, the Portion of the *Regenerate*. When the Principles of Goodness come once to be fixed in a Man, and his Virtue is grown constant and uniform, it is then, that this never fails to supply him with a stable Serenity and Satisfaction of Mind, not to be equalled by all the Joys of Sensuality. Now, if Conscience may be thus delighted in, there is abundant Reason why God, who is the great Rewarder of Conscience, should have a much larger Share of our Joy and Complacency ; especially considering, that the Delight, which arises from a Conscience of Well-doing, is nothing else, but a foreboding Instinct, that there will be a future Reward.

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A Messenger, for Instance, is sent to acquaint a Subject, that for his Loyalty, and other good Services done the Government, his Prince is resolved to promote him to Honour, to make him Governor of such a Province, or Ruler of such a City : The Messenger, in such a Case, may be received with Expressions of Joy and kind Entertainment ; but certainly the Subject forgets his Duty, if he transfers all his Acknowledgments upon the Messenger, and overlooks the Beneficence of his Prince. Just so stands the Case between God and our Consciences. Our Consciences are our Remembrancers of a future Reward, which, upon the Discharge of any Duty faithfully, pleasantly whisper within, *thus, and thus shall God reward thee for it* ; and with this welcome Message we may well be allowed to solace and delight ourselves ; but certainly we forget our Duty, if we suffer our Minds to be so wholly taken up with it, as not to look up to the Fountain from whence it comes. In a Word, he that attends to the Operations of his own Mind, may easily perceive, that there is so necessary a Relation between God and our Consciences, that, whenever we conceive any Pleasure from the Remembrance of any good Action, that pleasurable Movement of our Conscience is a natural Call to us to delight in God, who is the sole Foundation, and Hope, and Rewarder of it.

3. The same Lesson we may likewise learn from the last Kind of delectable Things, I mean, those of Heaven ; which though it be a State so pleasant and transcendently happy, that the Apostle tells us, the very Expectation of it is sufficient to work in us *a Rejoicing with Joy unspeakable and full of Glory* ; yet we are to remember, that the Root and Foundation of all the eternal *Beatitudes*, that are there, is God : That it is not, in short, the Place *Heaven*, but rather the *God of Heaven*, that is the Re-

ward of his Saints, procuring them endless Felicity from the Light of his Countenance upon them, and the Influence and Emanations of his Bounty towards them. And hence it is, that the Royal Psalmist declares to God; *thou art my Hope and my Portion, in the Land of the Living.* By the *Land of the Living* he means Heaven, (for Earth is no more than the Land of the Dying) and yet he does not look upon that *Land*, but merely upon *God in that Land*, as his Hope, and his Portion: To which Purpose we find the Apostle St. Paul, in speaking of the State of God's eternal Kingdom, clearing and determining the Matter in two Words, when he tells us, that, in that State, *God shall be all in all*, every Thing to every Saint; for all that they can wish, all that they can conceive, he will be to every one of them; will answer all their Desires, provide for all their Wants, and fill up the immense Capacities of Enjoyment, which he hath seated in every one's Soul. Since God then, of all the Kinds of *delectable* Things, that we can experience, either here or hereafter, is the only proper Object of our Joy, there is no Doubt to be made, but that, in Point of Duty and Interest both, we ought to place the chief of our Comfort and Complacency in him; considering withal, that this will be a Means to make us truly *religious* here, and eternally *happy* hereafter.

It is, without all Controversy, true, that there is no Principle in human Nature, that will so powerfully engage us in the Service of God, and so effectually recommend our Performances to him, as that of *Love*, which *tunes* our Wills into an Harmony with his, and makes our Respect to his Commandments become *universal*. Now, between Love and Delight there is so great an *Affinity*, that we can hardly distinguish them: What we love, we always delight in; and what we delight in, we always love; and,

and, if we distinguish them as nicely as we can, the Difference is only this :— Love is the Desire of our Object, and Delight is the Complacency, that accompanies Desire ; so that Delight presupposes and implies in it Love. Upon which it follows, that, if we delight in our Master, we must necessarily love him ; and, if we love him, we shall certainly keep his Commandments. The Man that addicteth himself to his Lusts, makes them his Master ; and though their Service be hard, and their Wages mean, yet nevertheless he stiles them *Pleasures*, and swallows them greedily down under that *gilded* Name. He watches and labours, he waits and solicits, he begs, and bears, and denies himself, and all with Content. Now, would we but transfer our Affections to God, and learn to love and delight in him thus sincerely, the very same Thing would happen to us ; his Service we should account our Pleasure and the most rigid Duties of it willingly submit to, as happy Occasions, not only to signalize our Love here ; but,

To secure our Title to the Glories and Felicities of our celestial Inheritance hereafter. The chief Enjoyments of Heaven, as we said before, consist not so much in the Pleasures of the Place, as in our *partaking of the Divine Perfections*, and *seeing God Face to Face*. And, therefore, if we do not accustom ourselves to delight in God, while we abide in this World, we can never be capable of enjoying Heaven, which, in Effect, is nothing else but God himself. For, be the Place never so beautiful and ravishing, yet that it can afford no such Satisfaction, without the Enjoyment of God, 'tis plain from that Passage of *Job*, where *Satan* is said to have *presented himself among the Sons of God*, i. e. to have been in Heaven, and mixed himself with the Blessed there ; and yet, it is certain, he was never the happier for all this ; but, being deprived

of the Light of God's Countenance, and taking no Pleasure in the *beatific Vision*, he, even in Heaven, carried his *Hell* about him : So impossible it is to enjoy Heaven, without some Complacency in God. But now, when, by long Custom and Usage, we have brought our Minds to this happy Temper, to be habitually well pleased and delighted with God, so as to rejoice in his Happiness, and acquiesce in his Will, and meditate on his Beauty and Goodness, with unfeigned Complacency of Soul, we are then in the same State (*i. e.* in Kind, tho' not in Degree) with the blessed Saints above, and, when we are called home to their Habitations, shall carry along with us Minds ready fitted and disposed for their Enjoyments.

If ever, therefore, we desire to partake of the Beatitudes of Heaven, and to live eternally in the View of that most lovely and most happy Object, which is the constant Feast and Entertainment of glorified Souls ; this we must set ourselves to do : — We must contemplate him with the Eyes of our Faith, approach him in our Prayers, taste him in his Ordinances, and feel him in the Comforts of Well-doing. We must settle in our Minds a strict Conformity to his Laws, a generous Disdain of earthly Things, a noble Confidence in Divine Providence, and a steadfast and assured Hope of an *eternal and never-fading Crown of Glory* ; for these are the proper Means to possess our Souls with a steady Delight and Complacency in God, our only *Principle* of living well, and of living for ever. We cannot, however, but take Notice, that, since God, in his own Nature, is so amiable, in his Perfections so transcendent, in his Laws so equitable, and in his Dispensations so gracious, there must be some intervening Hindrances, or, otherwise, no Man, of any tolerable Sense and Ingenuity, could forbear *delighting* in him. What, therefore, we
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think proper to do, on this Head, is to instance in some of the chief *Impediments* of this Kind, as well as the *Means*, that may be of Use to remove them.

1. What I reckon, then, the first Hindrance to this Duty, is *Inconsideration*; for in this State a Man *will not* delight in God: And, to this Purpose, we find him complaining, in that noted Place of the Prophet, *The Ox knoweth his Owner, i. e. loveth and takes Pleasure in its Owner, and the Ass his Master's Crib, but Israel will not know me, Israel will not love and take Pleasure in me; and the Reason of all follows, My People will not consider.* If ever therefore we intend to bring our Minds to take Pleasure in God, we must be careful to make them as active as possible, and every Day appoint certain Portions of our Time, to be expended in *Contemplation*, and other religious Exercises: I say, *appoint* and allot *certain Portions of our Time*; for, without doing this, by the *specious* Delays, which our deceitful Hearts are able to suggest, we may possibly be prevailed with to neglect them altogether.

2. Sin and Sensuality is another Hindrance, that puts us at a greater Distance from delighting in God; for in this State *we cannot* do it: And the Reason is, because, when once the Soul begins to taste Things forbidden with Complacency, it becomes gross and fleshly, and loses its spiritual Taste and Relish; the Wisdom of God having contrived it so, that none should be able to enjoy him, who presume to set up his Creatures in *Competition* with him. That God therefore may reign in our Affections, and be the supreme Object of our Delight, it is necessary that we moderate our Appetites in the Enjoyment of such Things, as are but too apt to engross them, and, above all, that we abstain from Sin, and be constant in our Duty. For

this will keep us in Friendship, and reconcile our Minds to God; and, when we are reconciled, his Excellencies will command our Love and Admiration, which, when placed on him, will produce in us boundless Joy and Satisfaction.

3. But there is a worse Obstruction still to this Duty, and that is sad and uncomfortable Apprehensions of the Nature of God, for, in this Case, *we dare not* delight in him. To form Conceptions of God, not according to the Image of his Word, but according to Mens particular Tempers, has been a customary Thing in all Ages. The *Stoicks* were a rigid Sort of People, and accordingly, their Notion of God was, not that he governed himself by the Reason of Things, but by a *stern* and inexorable *Fate*. Whether the Doctrine of God's *absolute Decrees* has descended from the same *Original*, we will not here dispute; but to believe that he has determined a great Part of Mankind to eternal Misery, merely to shew the *Arbitrariness* of his Dominion, what a dark and cloudy Scene does this draw over the Face of the Almighty, and, when we consider it, how must it damp our Rejoicing in him, and every now and then strike us with Affrightment; unless we could be sure of our own *Exception*, which none, without a particular Revelation, can? If therefore we would delight in God, and take Pleasure in the Contemplation of him, we must be careful to represent him fairly to our Minds, not according to our own sullen Temper, but as he has represented himself in Scripture, in some such Lineaments as these, *viz.* That he is a *bountiful* Benefactor to his Creation, and an *universal* Lover of Souls, who would have all Men be saved, and come to the Knowledge of the Truth, and heartily contributes to their eternal Welfare; that he leaves no Art of Love, or Method of Kindness, unattempted to do us good; calls us back, when
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we have gone astray ; upon our Return, graciously receives us ; when he hath received us, fits us for Happiness ; when he hath fitted us, abundantly rewards us ; and, when he hath rewarded us, everlastingly triumphs in our Glory and Happiness. These are Thoughts truly worthy of God, and befitting the infinite Goodness of his Nature : They will kindle in our Hearts a true Love and Delight in him, and make us serve him, at all Times, with a chearful Heart and liberal Affections.

3. Of fearing God.

TO fear God, is to have such a due Sense of his Majesty, and Holiness, and Justice, and Goodness, as shall make us not dare to offend him ; for each of these Attributes is proper to raise a suitable Fear in every considering Mind. His *Majesty*, a Fear, lest we affront it by being *irreverent* ; his *Holiness*, a Fear, lest we offend it by being *carnal* ; his *Justice*, a Fear, lest we provoke it by being *presumptuous* ; and his *Goodness*, a Fear, lest we forfeit it by being *unthankful*. Upon which it follows, that the Fear of God is, in a great Measure, the same reverential Affection, which a dutiful and loving Child pays to his Parents, such as will make him very careful in his whole Behaviour, and restrain him from the Commission of Sin, even tho' God had threatened no Punishment against it : And accordingly we shall, 1. Observe how reasonable and beneficial this Duty is ; and then, 2. Suggest an Argument or two to enforce it.

1. If we reflect upon the many Evils and Calamities, we are exposed to in this Life, we must agree, that it is no small Happiness to us to have the Passion of Fear implanted in our Nature. For, as in a Town, alarmed by an Enemy, *Centinels* are set to watch their Approaches, and to prevent the

Danger of a Surprise; so Fear in the Soul is appointed to this Office, to watch when and which Way all Evils come upon us, and to give us timely Warning of their Coming, that either we may decline their Attack, or be provided to receive it. But the same God, who hath given us Fear, for a Caution against Evil in *general*, has, in the mean Time, given us Notice, that his Displeasure is the greatest of all Evils; and therefore, as we account it a Point of Wisdom to be watchful against other Evils, so it is necessarily the highest Point of Wisdom to be watchful against this.

Considering indeed the infinite Distance between God and us, as he is our *Maker*, and we his *Creatures*; as he is our *Benefactor*, and we his *Dependants*; as he is our Supreme Lord, and we his *Subjects*; and as he infinitely excels us in all the Perfections of his Nature; we cannot but esteem him the only proper Object of our Dread and awful Apprehensions. For what are our shallow, and dark, and confused Conceptions, compared to that Wisdom, by which he comprehends all the Differences of Times at one View, and has all the Reasons and Possibilities of Things lying open and naked before him? What is all the Force of Mankind, though collected into one, in Comparison of that Divine Power, which gave Being to the World, when it was not, and governs and orders all Things in it, with greater Ease, than we can move a Finger? If we attend to these, I say, and several other Properties of the Divine Nature, *shall not his Excellency make us afraid, and his Dread fall upon us?* Especially considering, that the best of Men have Sins, and Guilt enough, to make them apprehend the utmost Expresses of his Wrath: For, *if he charges his Angels with Folly, and the Heavens are not clean in his Sight, how much more abominable and filthy is Man, which drinketh Iniquity like Water, i. e.*
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whose natural Propensity to Evil is like that of the thirsty Traveller, to drink of every Brook that he meets in his Way? *I have sinned*, therefore says holy Job, in the Anguish and Bitterness of his Soul, *I have sinned, and what shall I do unto thee, O thou Preserver of Men? For thou writest bitter Things against me, and makest me possess the Iniquities of my Youth.*

And indeed, when once God hath set himself to write bitter Things against us, Losses and Cares, Pains and Diseases, are some of his least Inflictions: He can send Terrors into the Soul, and, by letting loose our Thoughts upon us, make us more miserable, than all the Tyrants in the World can do by the most exquisite Torments. *The Arrows of the Almighty are within me*, says Job, in such Circumstances, *the Poison whereof drinketh up my Spirit; the Terrors of the Lord do set themselves in Array against me*: And therefore he begs Compassion from his Friends, *Have Pity upon me, have Pity upon me, O ye my Friends; for the Hand of the Lord hath touched me.* And indeed, considering how exceedingly heavy this Hand is, when once it is raised to give the Blow, that it cannot only kill the Body, but, after it hath killed the Body, has Power to cast both Body and Soul into Hell, there to be tormented Day and Night for ever and ever, we cannot but break out into the Psalmist's Acknowledgment, *Thou, even thou, art to be feared; and who may stand in thy Sight, when once thou art angry?*

But, how much soever God deserves to be feared, we cannot but observe, that nothing is more customary among us, than to have our Actions more influenced by the Fear of Man, than of God. Thus, when we commit any Sin in Secret, which we are afraid to commit openly; when we seek Retirement and Solitude, in order to cover our Guilt from the Cognizance of Men, we then shew,
that

that the Fear of Man lays a greater Restraint upon us, than the Fear of God; because we dare not venture to do that in the Presence of our Fellow-Creatures, which we presume to do in the Sight of our great Creator. Again, when we affect to appear to the World *religious* and virtuous, but, instead of taking Care to be what we appear, put on the *Sheep's Cloathing* only to hide the Wolf, or the Fox, or the Goat, that lurks within, we then shew, that the Fear of Man has greater Efficacy upon us, than the Fear of God; since the one is strong enough to make us *Hypocrites*, but the other has not Power to make us inwardly and sincerely good. Again, when we are ashamed of owning the Principles of our Religion, though we really do believe them, and, for fear of incurring the Censure of Preciseness and Singularity, affect to appear worse than we really are, we then likewise shew, that the Fear of Men awes us more, than the Fear of God; since the former causes us to smother that open Profession, which the latter requires, but cannot prevail with us to make. Again, when we fall in with the unwarrantable Customs of the World, and comply with the *modish* Follies and Vices of the Age, or Place, wherein we live, purely for Fear of being thought *unfashionable*, or ill-bred; this undue Compliance is another Proof of our fearing Men more than God; since our *Conformity to the World* is the Effect of the one, whilst the other has not Efficacy enough to make us be transformed, by the renewing of our Mind, to do what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect Will of God. Once more; when Tribulation or Persecution ariseth because of the Word, and, by and by, many are offended; when Men abjure their Religion, to save their Fortunes, or their Lives, and, to avoid a present Trouble, run headlong into such pernicious Practices, as will render them

them obnoxious to everlasting Perdition, it is undeniable, that, in this Instance, they are under greater Apprehensions from Man than God; since bodily Death, which is the utmost that Men can threaten, seems so formidable, that, to escape it, they run the Risque of that eternal Death, which shall be the final Lot of those, *who, denying Christ before Men, shall be denied by him, before his Father, which is in Heaven.*

As evident therefore as it is, that Men commit those Sins in secret, which they dare not commit openly, and take more Care *to appear*, than really *to be* devout; that, in a loose and licentious Age; they chuse rather to break the Laws of God, than to be out of Fashion, and to disown themselves under the Influence of Religion, than incur the Imputation of Singularity; that, in Times of Persecution, they fall away from the Truth, and *make Shipwreck of their Faith*, when Storms arise; so evident it is, that, in the Conduct of their Lives, they are more swayed by the Fear of Man, than they are by the Fear of God. But now what Reason can be given for this unreasonable and extravagant Conduct? The best that can be given, is but a bad one; but the best, as I take it, is this,

———— That we generally look upon Men, as implacable in their Resentments, but God, as gracious, and merciful, and apt to forgive. “Should
“ we therefore offend Men by a stiff and unseason-
“ able Virtue, we might incur the Effects of their
“ Displeasure, and, should they once be angry with
“ us, we might not be able, with all our Care, to
“ recover their good Graces; or should an ill
“ Opinion be formed, or an ill Character once
“ spread abroad of us, it might, perhaps, be out
“ of our Power to regain a good one: The Dan-
“ ger therefore of offending Men being so great,
“ and the Mischief of it so irretrievable, we can-
“ not

“ not be too careful to avoid it. But, on the
 “ other Hand, if we should, by any sinful Com-
 “ pliance, offend God, besides that the Punish-
 “ ment is at a greater Distance, we have sufficient
 “ Grounds to believe, that we can prevent it by
 “ Repentance : For *he will not deal with us after*
 “ *our Sins*, if we renounce them, *nor reward us ac-*
 “ *cording to our Iniquities*, if we are reclaimed from
 “ them ; *as the Heaven is high above the Earth, so*
 “ *great is his Mercy above the Mercy of Men : As*
 “ *far as the East is from the West, so far*, upon our
 “ Repentance, *will he remove our Transgressions from*
 “ *us :*” And therefore, since God is so slow to
 Anger, and so ready to forgive ; since Men are so
 easy to be offended, and so difficult to be intreated ;
 this exceeding Mercy of God, which the Psalmist
 thought a good Ground for his being *feared*, is
 often the Reason why Man is more dreaded than
 God.

The Prophet, however, has, in a very lively
 Manner, both confuted and exposed this wicked
 and unreasonable Conduct ; *Who art thou, that thou*
shouldest be afraid of Man, that shall die, and of the
Son of Man, which shall be made as Grass, and for-
gettest the Lord thy Maker, that hath stretched forth
the Heavens, and laid the Foundations of the Earth ?
Who art thou ? If thou be a rational Creature, as
 God designed thee, think if there be any Manner
 of Equality between the two Objects, between him,
 that created the whole Universe out of nothing, and
 him, *whose Breath is in his Nostrils*, and that Breath
 no longer there, than his Creator is pleased to lend
 it ; and, if thou art ashamed of the Comparison,
 then *fear not* the strongest Confederacy of Men, as
 the same Prophet excellently exhorts, *nor be afraid ;*
but sanctify the Lord of Hosts himself, and let him be
thy Fear, and let him be thy Dread.

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The Observation, which *Solomon* has made, is a very true one, that *the Fear of Man bringeth a Snare*, exposes us to Temptations, and makes us liable to be seduced from our Duty; *but whose putteth his Trust in the Lord, shall be safe*. For, how shocking must the Frowns and Menaces of great Men be to such, as are destitute of this *Armour of Proof*, which fortifies the Mind, and works it to a Firmness, like that of the three *Israelites in Babylon*, who, when the Question was put, whether they would worship the Image, or be cast into the Furnace, replied, with all Composedness, *O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee about this Matter*; i. e. in an Instant we can resolve what we are to do in this Case, because we were resolved, long ago, to suffer any Thing, rather than God's Displeasure? How galling must the Fears, about the Things of this Life, be to one, who carries no Eye to the Blessings of another? How must every cross Accident grieve him, and every slight Affliction wound him to the Heart? But he, that fears God, has a Preservative against every Thing of this Kind: Before they come, he fears them not, because he is secure of the good Providence of God on his Side; and, when they are come, he has wherewithal to break their Blow, because he has Assurance of Recompence, at least, if not of Relief. But, above all, how amazing must the Fear of Death be to him that fears not God? Death! that, like a dark Passage to a comfortless Prison, puts an End to all that he would have, and a Beginning to all that he would not. What Agonies of Dread and Horror must every Reflection upon this inject into his guilty Soul? But he that lives under the Sense and Fear of God, has prepared his Mind, before-hand, to meet the Prince of Terrors, and, seeing it is appointed for all Men once to die, pays this last Debt of Nature with

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Chearfulness, and leaves the Stage of Life, as one that is assured of his Passage to a blessed Eternity.

Well therefore might holy *Job* say, that *the Fear of the Lord, that is Wisdom*; since it not only makes us easy, by curing our other Fears, while we are here, but happy likewise, by securing our chief Concern and Interest hereafter. “ This then is
 “ Wisdom, not in Semblance, but in Deed; not
 “ Parcel-Wisdom, but Wisdom entire; not Wis-
 “ dom for the bye, but Wisdom for the main;
 “ not Wisdom for a Day, but Wisdom for ever.”
 All our other Attainments will avail us nothing. Our Knowledge of Arts and Sciences, of Laws and Policies, of Trade and Business, will never make us *wise*, till the Fear of God presides over that Knowledge, and directs it to the Purposes of an holy Life. And therefore we may well be allowed to enquire, *where is the Place of this Wisdom?* And by what Means shall we possess our Souls with this beneficial Passion?

1. The Royal Psalmist has told us his own Practice, and therein given us a very wholesome Admonition; *I have set the Lord always before me*, had a continual Sense of his Presence with, and Inspection over me, and therefore, *when I consider, I am afraid of him*. And, indeed, if the Consideration of never so mean a Person's being present with us is sometimes sufficient to restrain us from a sinful or indecent Action, how much more careful ought we to be of our Behaviour, before that Holy and Divine Majesty, who fills Heaven and Earth, and whose Notice nothing can escape? Do we then really consider what it is to have an eternal God a constant Witness and Observer of all our Actions, and even of all our Thoughts and Intentions; that a perfect Account of them is kept; that they are entered down in a Book, which, we are told, will be opened at the great Day of Accounts, and out
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of which we must be judged? If we do consider these Things, I say, and yet are not thereby restrained from sinning; there is but one Argument more, that can be supposed to work upon our Fears, and that is,

2. The Consideration of God's Justice and Severity against Sin: For, *if God spared not the Angels that sinned, as St Peter argues, but cast them down to Hell; and spared not the old World, but brought in the Flood upon the Ungodly; turning the Cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into Ashes, and making them an Example to those, that after should live wickedly: Nay, what is more, if God spared not his own Son, when, having no Sin of his own, he undertook only to be the Proxy and Representative of Sinners; how much more will he not spare them, whose Impieties have provoked his Wrath, and whose Damnation, upon that Account, slumbereth not? Knowing then the Terrors of the Lord, our Flesh may well tremble because of him, and we have great Reason to be afraid of his Judgments; that Judgment especially, which will end in an Eternity of Happiness or Misery, and therefore calls upon us daily to work out our Salvation with Fear and Trembling.*

4. Of Trusting in God.

TO trust in God, is to affect our Minds with such a due Sense of his Wisdom, and Power, and Goodness, and Faithfulness, as may engage us to commit all our Concerns to his Providence, to depend upon his Help and Protection in all the Difficulties and Dangers, and upon his Care and Provision for us, in all the Wants and Necessities, that can befall us: For each of these Divine Attributes do point out the Duty of our Reliance upon God. His *Wisdom* teaches us, that he has all pro-
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per Knowledge of our Condition, and is therefore duly qualified to take the Administration of our Affairs into his Hands ; his *Power*, that he wanteth not Ability to deliver us from the Calamities, under which we labour, and to bestow upon us the Benefits, that we want ; his *Goodness*, that he wanteth not Disposition to accomplish his gracious Purposes towards us, and, whenever it is fit and expedient for us, readily to grant what we request ; and his *Faithfulness*, that, having promised to be our Patron and Protector, he cannot *deny himself*, nor *alter the Thing that is gone out of his Mouth*. Upon these Foundations is our Reliance upon God established ; and our Purpose must be, 1. To enquire by what Reasons and Inducements we are encouraged to it ; and, 2. By what Means and Considerations we may promote it.

I. One great Requisite in any *Friend* or *Patron*, from whom we may have Expectance of Protection or Relief, is, that he be acquainted with the Nature of our Circumstances ; otherwise, be his Inclination never so much in our Favour, we may be undone, before his Helping-hand is stretched out to us. But now, in God, *whose Understanding is infinite*, and whose Eye every Moment has the whole Creation under his View, there can be no Risque of this Kind. For, be our Condition what it will ; if *inward Grief and Uneasiness*, our most secret Thoughts and most inward Groanings are not hid from him ; if *bodily Pain or Sickness*, he understands the best Means of Help, and the properest Seasons of applying them ; if *Poverty or Want*, he knows where all the Riches of the World are stored, and can *fill*, when he pleases, *our Belly with his Treasures* ; or, lastly, if *Danger or Distress*, he is infinitely wise, to contrive such Ways of Safety and Deliverance, as will surmount all those Difficulties and Perplexities, which would put human
Wisdom

Wisdom to a Loss. So that, upon the Consideration of this one Attribute, we may take up the Words of the Psalmist, and say, *God is our Hope and Strength, a very present Help in Time of Trouble. God is in the Midst of us, therefore shall we not be removed; God shall help us, and that right early; for the Lord of Hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our Refuge.*

2. But it is not enough that our Friend be acquainted with our Condition, unless he has *Power* likewise to remove the Evil, we complain of, and to procure us the Good, we want: And therefore we may observe, that there is nothing, which either Nature has made, or Art has contrived in such a Manner, as may best serve for our Defence, from which the *Psalmist* does not borrow *Allusions*, in order to excite in us a lively Sense of the mighty Power of God to defend his Servants in the needful Time of Trouble; *The Lord is my Rock, and my Fortrefs, and my Deliverer, my God, my Strength, in whom I will trust; my Buckler, the Horn also of my Salvation, and my high Tower:* And, to shew his great Care and Provision for our Wants, *the Lord*, says he, *delivereth the Souls of his Servants, and all they, that put their Trust in him, shall not be destitute.* Those indeed, who reject the Providence of God, and will be the Disposers of their own Fortune, may earn perhaps the *Wages of Iniquity*, but putting them into a *Bag with Holes*, as the Prophet expresses it, they find themselves often defeated; but though the *Lions* (to understand the Word for once in a metaphorical Sense, for such as live by plundering and oppressing others) *do lack, and suffer Hunger, yet they, that seek the Lord, shall want no Manner of Thing that is good.*

3. Nor is it enough that our Friend have it in his Power to supply our Wants, and stand by us in Danger, unless he is *willing* and disposed so to

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do; and therefore, to remove all Doubts of this Kind, the same *Psalmist* hath assured us, that God is not only essentially and immutably good, but good universally, good everlastingly, good to the *Pious* without Reserve, and good to the *Wicked* too, if they will but repent of their Sins, and live; for *the Lord is good, and doeth Good; his tender Mercies are over all his Works; and, as, he preventeth the Righteous with the Blessings of Goodness, so is he ready to forgive the Sinner, and plenteous in Mercy unto all them, that call upon him.* Conditions in Life make no Distinction with him; for, *lo! the Poor crieth, and he heareth him, yea, and saveth him out of all his Troubles.* Many, in our prosperous Days, will be forward enough in their Professions of Kindness and Zeal, but, when Trouble begins to arise, they think it convenient then to withdraw, and leave us to struggle alone with our Misfortune. But now the very Thing which among Men is usually the chief Cause, that takes off their Affection and Kindness, with God is an Argument of a contrary Nature: For tho' his Mercy and Goodness extend to all, yet are they more especially concerned for such, as are in a State of Misery, the *Fatherless*, the *Widow*, the *Prisoners*, the *Poor*, the *Stranger*, the *Friendless*, and such as have no Helper. And, from a Sense of this, we find the Devout in all Ages trusting not in Man, nor in his fallacious Friendship, but fleeing to God for Shelter, as they found the Cloud approaching. *Our Fathers trusted in thee, and thou didst deliver them; they called upon thee, and were holpen: They put their Trust in thee, and were not confounded; wherefore go not far from me, O Lord; for Trouble is hard at Hand, and there is none to help me: Thou art my Succour; haste thee to help me, to deliver my Soul from the Sword, my Darling from the Power of the Dogs.*

4. Nor is it sufficient that a Person have Knowledge, and Power, and Goodness enough, to be a fit Instrument of our Relief and Support, unless, in some Measure, he be under *Obligations* to do it for us : And, in like Manner, though we may desire and expect unpromised Favours from God, yet we can infallibly be sure of no Blessings, but what he, in his Word, has been graciously pleased to promise. Now Promises of Help to those, that are righteous, and put their Trust in God, are innumerable ; and on these Promises, if our Consciences bear us a comfortable Testimony, we may securely rely ; *the Eyes of the Lord are upon the Righteous, and his Ears are open unto their Cries ; and tho' their Afflictions be many, yet he shall deliver them out of them all. He shall redeem the Souls of his Servants, and none of them, that trust in him, shall be desolate.* Having therefore these gracious Promises, we may, with undaunted Courage, speak the Words, and take up the Resolution of the Psalmist : *God is our Refuge and Strength, therefore will we not fear, though the Earth be moved, and though the Hills be carried into the Midst of the Sea ; though the Waters thereof rage and swell, and though the Mountains shake at the Tempest of the same.* Such bold Expressions as these have been uttered by brave and gallant Men among the *Heathens* ; but what was extravagant in the Mouths of such, as had no Strength, but their own, to bear them up ; no Prospect of any other Recompence, than that of an *imaginary* Fame for behaving under Difficulties with Magnanimity ; that, when spoken by *one*, who has the Aid of God, to support him under Sufferings, and the Promises of God, to reward his Patience and Constancy, either with the Blessings of this Life, or with the Glories of the next, is a wise, solid, and well-weighted Resolution.

Thus, if we look into the Nature of God, and his most sacred *Attributes*, we find strong and irrefragable Arguments, why, in all our Troubles and Distresses, we should put our whole Trust in him; and if we now turn our Eyes upon ourselves, and consult our own Experience of his former Loving-Kindness to us, we shall perceive abundant Reason to continue the same Affiance in him for the future. For, of the many Calamities incident to human Life, how many, through the Goodness of God, have we escaped? How many, just hanging over our Heads, and what we saw no Possibility of avoiding, has his watchful Providence averted from us? How many, after they had seized us, and began to press hard upon us, has he at first abated, and afterwards wholly removed? And how many, by his over-ruling Power, have had so good an Effect, that we have Reason to rejoice for having been visited by them? Have we never, by a painful and lingering Sicknes, been brought to the very Brink of the Grave, and when Medicines have failed, and Physicians have pronounced our Doom, by some unexpected Turn, been restored to our Health again? Has our good Name never been aspersed by some foul and base Slanders, under which we have long lain, without being able to clear it, and has not God, by his good Providence, *brought forth our Righteousness as the Light, and our Innocence as the Noon-Day?* Have we never seen *Poverty coming upon us as an armed Man*, when, on a sudden, God has raised up unlooked for Benefactors to relieve us, or struck out for us unforeseen Means of Subsistence? Have we never known the Wrath and Malice of Men set against us, when, without any Offence of ours, they *came gaping upon us, and were ready to swallow us up quick*, when God has either *restrained the Fierceness of their Wrath*, or covered us, as it were, under

under the Shadow of his Wings, until their Tyranny has been over-past?

If then we have had any such Instances of God's Goodness to us, (as certainly we all of us have had, and, unless we have been very careless Observers of Providence, must have taken Notice of) from the Sense of past Mercies, we may draw this comfortable Conclusion, that *he, who hath delivered us from so great Dangers, and doth deliver, in him we may safely trust, that he will yet deliver us*: For his Hand, which has so often been stretched forth for our Help, *is not since shortened, that it can no longer save*; neither is his Ear, which has been so often opened to our Prayers, grown heavy, *that it can no more bear*. If we commit our Souls to him in Well-doing, the Experience we have already had of his watchful Care over us, will be our standing Conviction, that, in all Circumstances of Danger or Distress, *he will defend us under his Wings; under his Feathers we shall be safe; his Faithfulness and Truth shall be our Shield and Buckler*.

II. If then our Trust and Reliance on God, under all the Pains of Body, and Anxieties of Mind, under all the Frowns of Fortune, and Difficulties of Life, which have befallen us, and all the Apprehensions of Evils, which we fear may befall us, be both our Duty, and our Remedy, it may be a Matter well worth our Enquiry, by what farther Means and Considerations we may beget and nourish in us this happy Temper of Mind; and in order to this,

1. The first Thing we are to do, is to divest our Minds of all Presumption and Self-confidence. For when, without any Regard to God's Providence, Men are bold enough to rely on themselves and their own Abilities, and vainly imagine, that, without the Divine Help and Direction, by the Contrivance of their own Wit and Discretion, they

can compass their Design, and make themselves Masters of their utmost Wish ; it is no Wonder, that they should so frequently miscarry ; and therefore *trust thou in the Lord* (as the wise Man advises) *with all thine Heart, and lean not on thine own Understanding ; in all thy Ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy Paths ; for he that trusteth in his own Heart, as he says in another Place, is a Fool.* And a Fool he is without all Controversy ; for,

2. Considering the Situation of human Nature, it is absolutely necessary, that there should be something for us to lean upon, and have Recourse to, as our proper Support and Refuge. Every Man in his best Estate is but a feeble and infirm Creature : What from the Impotence of his Mind, and the Disorder of his Passions *within* ; what from the Troubles and Difficulties which he meets with from *without* ; together with the Mutability of all human Affairs, which cannot be ascertained by all the imaginable Foresight which Men are capable of ; it is impossible for us to live *independent*. Evils there are innumerable, from which, neither the Wisdom of the most prudent, nor the Riches of the most wealthy, nor the Forces of the most powerful, nor even the Virtue of the most innocent, can always secure them ; and therefore *Faith*, and *Hope*, and *Trust*, are altogether necessary in our present State ; and the Man must be in a very unsafe and uneasy Condition, that is not provided with something to support and relieve him in his Necessities. But now, if such a Support be necessary, we can have it no where placed so commodiously, as in the Hands of Almighty God ; For where can we find a safer *Director* of our Affairs, than an all-comprehending Wisdom ? Where a better *Protector* against Dangers and Insults, than omnipotent Power ? Where a better *Provider* of every

every Thing that we want, than that Goodness which is infinite ?

Since then the Necessity of trusting in something, the Folly of trusting in ourselves, and the Wisdom of trusting in God is so apparent ; these are Considerations wherewith we should frequently entertain our Thoughts : And, to give them a stronger Impression, we should always bear in Mind the Promises, that God hath made us of his Readiness both to guard us in Danger, and to relieve us in Want : *Because thou hast made the Lord, which is thy Refuge, even the most High, thy Habitation, there shall no Evil befall thee, neither shall any Plague come nigh thy Dwelling ; for he shall give his Angels Charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy Ways : They shall bear thee up in their Hands, lest thou shouldst dash thy Foot against a Stone.* This is our Protection from Danger, and our Security from Want are the comfortable Words of our blessed Saviour : *Take no Thought for your Life, what you shall eat, or what you shall drink ; neither for your Body, what you shall put on : Is not your Life more than Meat, and your Body than Raiment ? Behold the Fowls of the Air ! for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into Barns ; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them : Are ye not much better than they ? And why take ye Thought for Raiment ? Consider the Lillies of the Field, how they grow ; they toil not, neither do they spin ; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his Glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God cloath the Grass of the Field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the Oven, shall he not much more cloath you, O ye of little Faith ? Therefore take no Thought, saying, what shall we eat ? or what shall we drink ? or wherewithal shall we be clothed ? for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have Need of these Things. But seek ye first the King-*

dom of God and his Righteousness, and then all these Things shall be added unto you.

5. Submission to GOD.

SUBMISSION to the Will of God is of two Kinds, the Submission of Obedience, which consists in a ready Compliance with his Commands in all Things, and the Submission of *Patience*, which is nothing else, but a quiet and chearful Suffering of whatever Afflictions he shall think fit to lay upon us ; which is the Duty we are here to enforce and recommend.

Patience then is that Virtue, which qualifies us to bear all Conditions and all Events, by God's Disposal incident to us, with such Apprehensions and Persuasions of Mind, with such Dispositions and Affections of Heart, and with such external Deportment and Practice of Life, as God and good Reason require, *viz.* with a thorough *Persuasion*, that nothing befalls us, but either by the Permission or Direction of Divine Providence ; a firm *Belief*, that all Occurrences, however contrary to our Desires, are both consistent with God's holy Attributes, and conducive to our Good ; a full *Trust* and *Dependence* on him, either for Strength to enable us to bear our Afflictions, or for a reasonable Removal or Mitigation of them ; abstaining from all discontented Complaints and Murmurs against Providence ; from all malicious and revengeful Thoughts against the *Instruments* of our Sufferings ; and from all unworthy and irregular Courses, to extricate ourselves from them ; that so, *suffering according to the Will of God, we may commit the keeping of our Souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator.*

In these, and such-like Acts, does the Practice of this Virtue consist ; and the Inducements we have to it arise, I. From the Consideration of the Nature

Nature of God, and our Relation to him ; and II. From the Benefits of Virtue itself, and the Advantages that accrue to us from our Afflictions.

I. It is an Observation made by *Eliphaz*, in the Book of *Job*, that *Affliction cometh not forth of the Dust, neither doth Trouble spring out of the Ground*, but are disposed and appointed by God, who has a sovereign Right and Dominion over us, and may therefore deal with us as he pleases, so long as he leaves us in a State preferable to *Non-existence*. And, from this Consideration, the devout Psalmist, in all the Calamities that befel him, was not only dumb, and opened not his Mouth, in any Murmuring or Complaint, because it was God's Doing, but even carried his Resolution to the highest Pitch of Resignation, *while I live, will I praise the Lord, yea, as long as I have any Being*, though deprived of every Thing else, *will I sing Praises unto my God*. He had the Consideration before him of the numberless Favours and Benefits, which from Time to Time God had extended to him, and, if he so frequently received Good at the Hand of God, it was but equitable, he thought, that he should sometimes receive Evil. He considered the infinite Wisdom of the supreme Disposer of Things, and implicitly believed, that there was an exact Harmony in all his Administrations, and that, at the last Day, when we shall behold his Presence in Righteousness, and this great and wonderful Scene shall be laid open and revealed, every one should be satisfied with the Beauty and just Conduct of it, though to us, who sit at a Distance, some of its Parts seem very cloudy and perplexed. He called to Remembrance his paternal Relation, and knowing, that, *like as a Father pitieth his own Children, so is the Lord merciful unto them that fear him*, he could not but perceive, that the Afflictions, he laboured under, were necessary for the Chastisement of

of his Faults : He therefore reflected upon his own State and Condition of Life, and perceiving that, as he was by Nature God's *Servant*, it was but decent for him to acquiesce in that *Rank and Station*, which he had appointed him in his large Family; that as he was a *Sinner*, and *less than the least of God's Mercies*, it was no more than his Duty to be content and thankful for any Thing on this Side Damnation. *We will bear the Indignation of the Lord*, says the afflicted Church in the Prophet *Micah*, *because we have sinned against him*; for *wherefore doth a living Man complain, a Man for the Punishment of his Sins*? Since Afflictions are the natural Fruit of our Wilfulness and Misconduct, we ought always to cast the Blame on ourselves, and never dare to upbraid God's Providence : Especially considering, that, were we much more *innocent* than we are, this World is not a Place of perfect Pleasure and Delight; that we came not hither to do our own Will, or enjoy our own Wishes, but are naturally *born to Trouble*, as the Sparks fly upwards, and need not therefore be surprized, if, in a Vale of Tears, we meet with such Calamities and Crosses, as are suitable to our Nature and Condition; that no Adversity, either in Kind or Degree, is peculiar to us, but, if we take a View of other Men, and compare our Case with theirs, we shall find, that we have many Associates in Misery, many far worse, and most as ill afflicted as ourselves : That it has all along been the Lot of the best Men, and greatest Favourites of God, to be exercised in this Manner; and that *the Captain of our Salvation*, a *Man of Sorrows*, and acquainted with Grief, was himself made perfect through Sufferings. If therefore we either look upon God, as the Author and Disposer of all our Afflictions, or upon ourselves, either as *Men*, that are subject to them, or as *Sinners*, that do justly deserve them,

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it must needs be great Partiality and Perverseness in us, to be displeased, that we are not exempted from bearing, either the Wages of our Iniquity, or the common Burthen of our Nature: Especially if we consider,

II. Some of the Advantages, that do accrue to us from our Afflictions, as well as the great Benefits of bearing them with Patience. The Masters of *Ethicks*, who have looked into the Properties of the Mind, are generally of this Opinion, that Impatience and Discontent, under any Kind of Tribulation, proceed from a *Poorness of Spirit*; argue a Man conscious of his own Weakness, and that he has not Courage to resist an Evil; whereas, had he but Resolution to face it, he would be so employed, as to have no Leisure to complain; his Blood would be so heated with the Sense of Honour, and the Hopes of Victory, that the Blows and Smarts of the Encounter would scarce be felt. He, that *in Patience possesses his Soul*, is always easy and serene: His Spirits do not rise and fall with his Circumstances: The actual Suffering of Adversity cannot deject him: He relies upon his Innocence and his God: Upon this Foundation he stands fixed like a Rock, and tho' Waves and Storms may pass over him, yet he remains unshaken, nor can all the Shocks of Adversity ever deprive him of his Principles, or his Peace. He is persuaded, that as God stands in no Need of our Happiness, much less of our Misery, so he does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the Children of Men; and therefore whenever he is compelled to do so, it is either for the Correction of our Failings, or the Improvement and Purification of our Virtues, that the Trial of our Faith, as the Apostle has it, being much more precious, than that of Gold, which perisheth, though it be tried with Fire, might be found unto Praise, and Honour, and Glory, at the Appearing

ing of Jesus Christ. For this is another Inducement to Patience and Resignation under all Conditions, that *our light Affliction, which is but for a Moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory, while we look not at the Things that are seen, but at the Things which are not seen; for the Things, which are seen, are temporal, but the Things, which are not seen, are eternal.* And is there now any Room for such a Passion, as Grief or Discontent, after such a Consideration as this? Can a Man, acting upon this Persuasion, be disturbed at any Accident, or be impatient in any Condition of Life? Can he murmur or repine at the Strokes of God's afflicting Hand, which he knows are given with a gracious Intent, which are present Interruptions, but future Enlargements of his Happiness, like the misty *Vail* of the Morning, which for a while shuts in the Rays of the Sun, but at length contributes to the greater Lustre and Triumph of the Day? Shall not I then *drink the Cup*, be the Ingredients what they will, which *my heavenly Father* has given? "My Father, who is too perfect, to need my Misery, though, in respect of his supreme Dominion, he might afflict me as he pleases; who is too wise to mistake my true Interest; and too good to prescribe any Draught, but what he knows is wholesome for me; who has given me all the Happiness I enjoy, and parted with more, for my Sake, than he can possibly take from me in this World: Has parted with his beloved Son for my Redemption, and, in lieu of what he takes, has provided for me an *Inheritance incorruptible*; and shall I then refuse the Cup, which such a Father as this has given?" No; *I will count it all Joy* (will the truly Christian Sufferer say) *when I fall into Temptation*, I will be contented and satisfied under God's severest Dispensations.

6. Of Inward Purity.

PURITY of Heart, in the general Notion of it, may be considered in a double Sense ; either in Opposition to *Mixture*, and so it removes *Hypocrisy* ; or in Opposition to *Pollution*, and so it removes *Sensuality*. In the former Sense, it denotes the Simplicity and Sincerity ; and, in the latter, the Sanctity and Cleanness of our Thoughts and Intentions : So that, in the Sense, wherein we mean, at present, to take it, “ *the Pure in Heart* ” are such, as, meaning to recommend themselves chiefly to God’s Acceptance, who *searcheth the Heart*, regulate, not only the *external* Conduct of their Lives, but also the *inward* Frame and Habit of their Minds, and conform, not only their Actions, but their Wills and Desires, their Thoughts and Designs, to the Rule of the Law, and to the Dictates of the *internal Light* of God in their Soul : Such as *sanctify the Lord God in their Hearts* ; compose the inmost Recesses of their Minds into an holy Awe and Reverence of the Divine Presence ; set a Law to all their *intellectual* Powers, and suffer not the least Thought or Passion to violate the Order either of Reason or Grace : Such, lastly, as yield no Consent either to the Being or Stay of irregular Motions ; as delight themselves with no pleasing Recollections, no *imaginary* Scenes of their past Immoralities ; but set themselves at the greatest Distance from Sin, resist the very first Beginnings, and, as near as they can, *abstain from the least Appearance of Evil*.”

This is the most resembling Idea we can frame to ourselves of the *Pure in Heart* : And, that it may not be taken for a mere Idea, or a Thing of Notion, rather than Practice, we shall, I. Represent

sent the Necessity and Happiness of this Disposition of Soul ; and then, II. Suggest some of the most probable Means, that may be conducive to our attaining it.

I. The best of the Heathen Writers did not always resolve the Goodness of *moral* Duties into a true Principle : They argued, indeed, from the Convenience, the Utility, the Beauty, and Credit of it, but they seldom derived its Origin from the *Spring-Head*, or discovered, that all its regular, its proper and vital Motions proceeded from the Heart. Nay, the *Jews* themselves seemed, in a great Measure, to be ignorant of this Doctrine ; and their Ignorance herein was the Ground of a common Error among them, that *Concupiscence*, actual Concupiscence, had not *formally* the Nature of Sin ; and provided they performed the *exterior* Act, commanded by the Law of *Moses*, they were less solicitous what became of the *inward* Dispositions of the Mind. But our blessed Saviour has raised human Virtue to its proper Height, and his improving Expositions of the *Mosaic* Law have taught and instructed us, wherein the Holiness of a Christian must consist. *Ye have heard, that it has been said by them of old Time, Thou shalt not commit Adultery ; but I say unto you, that whosoever looketh upon a Woman, to lust after her, hath committed Adultery with her already in his Heart.* By *lusting*, however, here, as we said in another Place, must not be understood the bare natural Appetite of Concupiscence, which, as such, is *indifferent* ; but the irregular Determination of it, always attended with the Consent of the Will ; which Consent may either relate to the Desire itself, or to the Acting of it : If to the *Act*, then the Man is, in all moral Accounts, a compleat *Adulterer*, and will be so esteemed by God, who, as he sees, so he judges by the Heart, and will not think a Man more innocent,

nocent, only for wanting an Opportunity of committing what he intended. But if the Consent be only to the *Desire*, then, though the Man be not a compleat Adulterer, yet he may be truly said, in the Stile of the *Psalmist*, to be a *Partaker with the Adulterer*, to have entered within some Degrees of *Uncastity*, and to have transgressed against that *Christian Purity*, which forbids all Consent, not only to the compleat Acts, but also to the first Motions of Sin.

And indeed, the very Genius and Design of the Christian Religion, is, to destroy *Corruption*, especially that, which is in the World through Lust; to teach us, to crucify our *Affections*, and inordinate Desires; and to wash and sanctify us in the Name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God: For this is the Will of God, says the Apostle, even your *Sanctification*; that ye should abstain from Fornication; that every one of you should know how to possess his Vessel in Sanctification and Honour; for God hath not called us unto *Uncleanness*, but unto *Holiness*. And as he has thus called us, so he hath given us Reasons, entirely new, and such as the World never knew before, to engage our Practice of this Duty: For know ye not, says the same Apostle, that your Bodies are the Members of Christ? Know ye not, that they are the Temples of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, and which ye have of God? Know ye not, that ye are not your own, but are bought with a Price; therefore glorify God in your Body, and in your Spirit, which is God's? Our Bodies are not our own to use, or to abuse at Pleasure, because our Saviour has actually purchased them to himself, by his Death and Sufferings for their Redemption. They are the Members of Christ, who, having thought fit to honour the whole human Nature, Body as well as Soul, by his appearing in it, has taken us into so near a Relation to him, as ought not to be abased to Filthiness and

Pollution:

Pollution: And lastly, they are the Temples of the Holy Ghost, dwelling in them, to direct and influence our Minds, and therefore should not be employed in any Thing unworthy his Presence, or repugnant to his Purity.

And if the Spirit of God is to dwell and abide in our Minds, there is an absolute Necessity for their Sanctification: For this Reason, though all Men may, at some Time or other, be Partakers of the common and ordinary Motions of the Spirit, yet none but very good Men can be said to be the Temples of his Residence; which seems to be intimated to us, in that remarkable Passage of the Revelation: *Behold I stand at the Door, and knock; if any Man hear my Voice, and open the Door, I will come in to him, and sup with him*: For by standing at the Door, and knocking, is meant common and preventing Grace; and this indeed is used to all, without any previous Qualifications; but he does not come in and sup, he does not take up his Residence, and become a familiar Guest, till his Voice be heard, and the Door opened, i. e. till the Man has well attended to, and complied with, those antecedent Motions and Suggestions.

Good Reason therefore had our gracious Saviour to pronounce a Blessing upon the Pure in Spirit, and to recommend this amiable Disposition of Mind, under no less a Consideration, than that *they shall see God*. They see him in his Word, how good and reasonable all his Precepts are, how precious his Promises, and how just his Threatenings. They see him in his Ordinances, what Profit, what Advantage he intends by them, how he designs them for Channels to convey his Grace, and Spirit, and Influences to their Soul. They see him in his Works, how wonderful and powerful he is, with what rare Art and Contrivance he hath founded the Earth upon nothing, and spread out the Heavens like a Curtain.

Certain. They see him in his *Providence*, how righteous, and holy, and regular he is, in managing the Affairs, and adjusting the great Revolutions of the World. They see him in his *Mercies*, how gracious and condescensive he is, how vigilant in his Care, and how bountiful in his Provision for them. They see him in their *Afflictions*, how wise and kind he is in sending them, and what Love, and Benefit, and Edification he designs by them: They see him, in short, in the Knowledge and Contemplation of his Divine Nature and Perfections *here*; and, when their own Nature is spiritualised, shall see him more clearly and perfectly *hereafter*.

That inward and spiritual Purity has a peculiar Aptness, in order to *the Vision of God*, we need not doubt, if we consider, that the only Reason, why we see not God now, is the Grossness of this Tabernacle, wherein the Soul is incased. This is that Skreen, which parts the *material* from the *intelligible* World; and therefore the more abstract we are from the Body, and from the bodily Life, the more fit we shall be, both to behold, and to endure the Rays of the Divine Light. We find, that, even now, the purer and finer our Blood and Spirits are, the freer and clearer are our Thoughts; the brighter and more transparent this *Glass* is, the more the *ideal* Light will dart in upon our Souls: And in like Manner hereafter, the purer the Soul is, the purer will all its Faculties and Operations be; the less it retains of corporeal Gusts and Relishes, the more recollected and undivided will its Powers be, and, consequently, more strong and vigorous upon the Object where they fix. Nor will the Soul itself only, be prepared for the blissful Vision, but convey a Fitness likewise to its spiritual Body: For, though we must see through a *Glass* then, as well as now, yet will the *Glass* be clearer,

according to the different Purity of the Soul, which, as we may observe even in this Life, gives a particular Brightness of Air to the Countenance, and makes the Face to shine with an inimitable Lustre. Nor can we suppose, but that God, who is so great a Lover, will also be a liberal Rewarder of inward Purity, and, as he delights to dwell with Souls of this Complexion *now*, will reveal himself more plentifully, and make larger Communications of his Presence, and Emanations of his Goodness to them *hereafter*.

Who *then shall ascend unto the Hill of the Lord*, says the Royal Psalmist, *and who shall stand up in his holy Place ? Even he that hath clean Hands, and a pure Heart* : A pure Heart is indeed the *indispensable* Condition of everlasting Happiness ; for *without Holiness none shall see the Lord* ; and, considering the close and necessary Connexion there is between Purity of Heart and Purity of Life, it may not improperly be said, that it is the *only Condition* requisite. For, if our Heart be pure, our Hands will be clean too, and if our Heart be with God, and all our Actions, our whole Service, tho' otherwise very imperfect, will be graciously accepted, and rewarded by him.

II. How then shall we acquire to ourselves this necessary, and so beneficial a Virtue ? And what Endeavours shall we use, in order to cleanse our Hearts, and purify our Minds ? 1. The first Thing we are to do is, to attain right Notions of God, and a strong Conviction of his Omniscience, that *he searcheth all Hearts*, and understandeth our Thoughts afar off ; that he compasseth our Thoughts, and our lying down, and is acquainted with all our Ways : And, as he sees our Hearts, and *is of purer Eyes, than to behold Vanity and Iniquity*, so will he never dwell in that Breast, where depraved Appetites and vicious Imaginations have taken

taken Possession. For *what Agreement*, as the Apostle argues, *hath the Temple of God with Idols?* Now *ye are the Temple of the living God*, as God *hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my People.* Supposing we were to receive some mighty Prince, or Person of great Quality into our House, would we not make all Things neat and clean, and take Care that nothing be wanting, that may give him Content and Satisfaction; that every Apartment be set out, and garnished, and adorned, as far as our Ability reaches? But now what is the greatest Man, the greatest Potentate upon Earth, compared to the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords; to a God purer than Angels, dwelling in *Light inaccessible*, and by whose Will and Command the whole Creation stands or falls? Since then this Sovereign Majesty is willing to dwell in our Souls, the Consideration cannot but strike us, how holy, how pious, how chaste, how pure our Thoughts and Affections ought to be, in order to give so magnificent a Guest a suitable Entertainment.

2. Another Means to implant in our Minds the Grace of *Purity*, will be frequently to contemplate the Joys and Felicities of the *beatific Vision*, which God hath appointed for its Reward. For if we are pleased with the Sight and Conversation of an intimate Friend, especially after a long and tedious Absence, and think it a joyful Thing to behold the Face of a reconciled Enemy; let us then consider, what it will be for us to be admitted into the Presence of that Countenance, which alone can speak Peace and solid Comfort to us. Nay, let us bear in Mind the Honour and great Privilege of being called up to serve the King of Glory, in his own Court, and near his Person; where we may for ever contemplate his infinite Majesty, Power, Wisdom, and Goodness. Did we fix this great Ob-

ject in our Minds, and consider (as far as Words can convey the Idea) what it is to *see* and to converse with God, the Reflection would naturally arise, that we ought to *purify ourselves, even as he is pure.* To which Purpose it will be necessary,

3. To be earnest and importunate in our Prayers, that he would not *lead us into Temptation*, but keep us from such Objects, as are apt to kindle evil Thoughts, and would restrain the great Enemy of Souls from suggesting any: Above all, that he would send his Blessed Spirit to our Aid and Assistance; to enlighten our Understandings, to purify our Affections, and to fix it indelibly upon our Minds, *that to be carnally minded is Death, but to be spiritually minded is Life and Peace.*

7. Of Heavenly-Mindedness.

TH E R E are two Senses, wherein the Word *Heaven* may be taken, either for the State of another Life in general, or for the particular Glory and Happiness of that State. In the *former* of these Senses, *Heavenly-Mindedness* implies our perpetual Remembrance of our *Mortality*; our having a constant Prospect into the other World, which must be our final Home, and steadfastly looking beyond the Limits of Time, to the *Vastness* of Eternity; our dwelling, in short, on the Meditation of the four last Things, *Heaven, Hell, Death, and Judgment*; how great they are in their Consequence, how certain in their Event, and how near in their Approach; and, in Consideration of this, always *waiting*, and preparing ourselves for this great and important Change.

In the *latter* Sense of the Word, *Heavenly-Mindedness* implies our Contemplation of the infinite Perfection of the Divine Essence, and the inconceivable

ceivable Happiness of those, who shall enjoy the Communications of his Blessedness. It is to meditate upon, and have always in View, that *Weight of Glory*, that *incorruptible Crown*, with which the *Sufferings of this present Time are not worthy to be compared*, no, not to be mentioned : To meditate Day and Night upon that happy Time, when we shall be Partakers of *Moses's* With, and admitted to the intimate *Vision* of that mysterious and incomprehensible Excellence, which is too great for our mortal Faculties, and which none can *see* and *live* : To meditate upon the blessed Society of Saints and Angels; upon that Harmony of Divine Love, and intellectual Sympathy; upon the elevated and raised Perfections of a glorified Soul, the Enlargement of its Understanding, the Sublimation of its Will and Affections, and upon the Angelical Temper of our Spiritual Body; in short, upon all those glorious Things, which are *spoken of the City of God*, and upon the infinite Consolations of that joyful Sentence, *Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you* : And, lastly, it is to contemplate all this, not in a cold and indifferent Manner, as if it were a distant and precarious Reversion, but as a State that will shortly and certainly be, and therefore to be embraced with that Faith and Assurance, which is *the Substance of Things hoped for, and the Evidence of Things not seen*.

All this the Word may be said to import; and therefore, putting both of these Senses together, we shall, 1. Observe the Reasonableness of the Duty; and, 2. Some of the chief Benefits that arise from it.

I. The Wise among the Heathens (i. e. Those who believed the Immortality of the Soul) entertained high and worthy Notions of a future State, and have most agreeably and delightfully represented

sented the Place, the Society, the Entertainments prepared for their Reception after Death. Upon these Considerations the Account we have of their Philosophers is, that they chose to live abstractly, and dwelt much upon the Contemplation of what they were to be hereafter. The *Epicureans*, indeed, who had no Thoughts of a future Existence, made this their standing Maxim, *Let us eat and drink, for To-morrow we die*: And in this they acted consistently enough; for, how vain and contemptible soever the World in itself may be, yet, upon their *Hypothesis*, it was their greatest Prudence to make as much of it as they could, because it was *their All*: But those, who had better Conceptions of their *rational* Part, and of its surviving the *Funeral* of the Body, had another Way of Reasoning. They perceived, that their Soul, in this State, was, as it were, out of its *Element*, confined to a Prison of Flesh, and thence hindered from acting with that Freedom and Vivacity, which, upon some certain *Sallies*, they found was congenial to it. They perceived, that our present State of Life, both by Reason of its Shortness, and the other Vanities and Vexations that attend it, was not considerable enough to justify the Wisdom and Goodness of God in creating the World. They perceived, that Man, endued with such large Capacities, and impatient Desires of Happiness, which nothing on Earth could satisfy, was a very poor and contemptible Creature indeed, and the more so for being so highly exalted at present, if this was the only *Scene* he was to act, and finally perished, when he died. And, from these Observations, they inferred, that this Life was but a *Passage* to the next, a short Voyage to an Harbour of Rest; that Heaven, in short, was their Home, and their native Region, and, in Consequence of this Persuasion, *what* was their End and sovereign Happiness,

ness, that they made the Subject of their Thoughts, and Desires, and daily Contemplations.

2. This was the Reasoning of the honest *Heathens*, but the *Christian* Religion has furnished us with Arguments of a peculiar Nature. *St Paul*, writing to the *Philippians*, propounds his own Practice; as a Pattern for their Imitation; *Beloved, be Followers together of me, and mark them which walk so, as ye have us for an Ensamble; for our Conversation is in Heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ*: The Word, which we render *Conversation*, signifies *Citizenship*, and alludes to a Practice frequent among the *Romans* in particular, whereby not only *private Persons*, but whole *Cities* and *Provinces*, were admitted to certain Rights and Immunities peculiar to that *Commonwealth* and *Constitution*, though they were neither *Natives*, nor *Inhabitants* of the City of *Rome*. These were sometimes bestowed freely, as a Mark of Friendship and Favour; sometimes purchased at a considerable Price; sometimes inherited by Descent: But, which Way soever conveyed, the Possession of them was esteemed a very valuable Advantage: And, in Allusion to this, the Apostle intimates, that *Christians* are *Denizens* of Heaven, and, though living now at some Distance from thence, are nevertheless incorporated there; ruled by the same Laws, and admitted to the same Privileges, and therefore ought to live in the same Manner with the blessed *Inhabitants* of that City which is above.

We cannot, indeed, in all Points, come up to their *Perfection*, till we come to live in the same Place where they do; but we are bound to aspire at as great a Resemblance of them, as our present Condition will admit; as therefore they are happy, beyond all Imagination, in the Vision and Fruition of Almighty God, so should we, by devour

Prayers and pious Meditations, approach and draw near unto him; contemplate the Glory of his Majesty, the Beauties of his Works, the Wisdom of his Providence, the Wonders of his Mercy and Goodness, and that amazing Instance and Illustration of it, the Redemption of lost Mankind by the Death of his dear Son. As they are set above the Vanities and Changes of this World, by the present Enjoyment of Bliss unchangeable and eternal; so should the Prospect of that Bliss raise our Hearts above the present World, inspire a generous Disdain of all the insincere Pleasures and short uncertain Advantages here below; lighten our Afflictions, moderate our Passions, and reconcile us to the Apprehensions and Approaches of that *Dissolution*, which, in Death, lays the Seeds of an endless Immortality. As they are freed from Sin, and shine in uninterrupted Holiness; so should we consider ourselves, as Persons no longer under the Power of a carnal Principle, but animated by a Divine Spirit to a rational Life, a Life of Temperance and Chastity, of severe Virtue and exemplary Piety, of Activity and unwearied Industry in doing Good, and of such habitual Mortification of those Affections, which move us to Evil, that, as with the Blessed above *they are not*, so with us they may be, as though *they were not*.

3. Another Argument, peculiarly *Christian*, to engage our Endeavours and Aspirings after Heaven, is what St Paul makes use of to the *Colossians*; *if ye then be risen with Christ, seek those Things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the Right-Hand of God: Set your Affections on Things above, and not on Things on the Earth; for ye are dead, dead to Sin, and to the World, and your Life is hid with Christ in God*; the Force of which Reasonings is plainly this, — That it becometh the Disciples to imitate their Master, and the Members to conform to the

the Head, to conform in a *figurative*, though they cannot in a *literal* Sense. Though, therefore, with *Christ* we cannot as yet *loosen the Bands of Death*, and break through the Prison of the Grave; yet we can now rise with him from the Death of Sin to Newness of Life, and by his Resurrection are not only enabled, but also admonished so to do: And although, in his bodily Ascension, *we cannot*, as he told *St Peter*, *follow him now*; yet we can, in some Sense, ascend with him by a proper Elevation of our Thoughts and Affections, and from the Contemplation of his Ascension are mystically invited so to do. The Ascension of our Saviour, in short, as it is the Pledge and Pattern of *ours*, adds new Supplements of Support to our Hopes of arriving at that blessed Place whither he is gone before, and must needs, therefore, at the same Time, fan the Flame of our Affections, and make them tend upward: For with good Reason therefore may the pious and devout Soul now bear up herself upon the Wings of Contemplation, Love, and Desire, and follow her ascending Lord, where the Eyes of the wondering Apostles were forced to leave him; and, in the Words of *Elisba* to his departing Master, say, *As the Lord liveth, and as my Soul liveth, I will not leave thee; blessed and holy is he, that has Part in this first Ascension; for on him the second Death shall have no Power.* Which leads us,

II. To observe some of the chief *Benefits*, that arise from our being possessed of this Virtue; as it is the best Expedient to beget and confirm in us a Contempt of the World; to mitigate and assuage the Evils of Life; to give Pleasure and Satisfaction to the Mind here; and to fit and prepare the Soul for Happiness *hereafter*.

I. We, who live on the Face of the Earth, may think it a Body of considerable Magnitude, but, if we

we were to take a View of it from one of the higher Orbs, it would appear no greater than a *Point*. Now, though this might be demonstrated upon *mathematical* Principles, yet, as every one is not capable of doing that, such an high and elevated Prospect would certainly save us the Trouble. The Matter is the same in the Case before us. This World, considered alone, may carry perhaps with it a specious and good Appearance; and he that considers it in this Light, will need Reason and Argument to convince him of its *Vanity*; but now it is but conversing a little in the other World, and taking a View of it from thence, and we shall find, that, without any more ado, it will shrink away almost into nothing. From such an elevated Prospect, all the Pride and Gaiety of this Earth would be but like the Flutter of so many Butterflies, and the Business and Hurry of Life, like the Toils of so many Ants about a little Mole-hill.

2. And as the Contemplation and Desire of Heaven *lessens the Good*, so it *lessens the Evil* of the present Life, and is an effectual Means both to *wean* us from the one, and *support* us under the other. That Wants and Afflictions, Diseases and Languishings, Sorrow and Decay, are Incumbrances upon Mortality, from which the brightest Virtue and most heavenly Dispositions are not exempted, is verified by daily *Experience*; but then we mistake the Matter much, if we suppose the same Calamities equally grievous to all. The Sense of these is unquestionably more or less afflicting, as they find a Man's Mind more or less armed to encounter them; and every Impression is proportionably tender, as it wounds us in the Part most sensible, and threatens the Destruction of that, wherein we esteem our Happiness to consist: From whence it follows, that *to mind earthly Things*, in
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St Paul's Meaning, is to multiply Sorrows to ourselves, by giving Afflictions a Power of making us miserable ; but that *to have our Conversation in Heaven*, is the Way to consult our present Ease, as well as our future Happiness. For, while we look upon Heaven as our Home and Place of Rest, the Inconveniencies upon our Journey are easily dispensed with, and we learn to be content in our Travels, with the Want of those Accommodations, of which we have Plenty and Abundance to welcome our Arrival at our fixed Habitation ; where, the more Troubles we have passed through, the kinder Usage we shall find, and so either totally forget them, or remember them with Pleasure ; when *our light Affliction, which was but for a Moment, hath wrought for us a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory.*

3. And as the Desire and Contemplation of Heaven and heavenly Things mitigates the Afflictions of Life ; so, at one and the same Time, it both furnishes the Soul with the greatest Pleasure *here*, and prepares it for the highest Enjoyments *hereafter*. That *intellectual* Pleasures are greater than *sensual*, the Sensualists themselves will hardly deny : But now, of all intellectual Pleasures, to contemplate the infinite Perfection of God, and the Happiness of those blessed Spirits that enjoy him ; the Order of Angels, and that noble and blessed Company of Saints ; to contemplate the last and richest Scene of Providence, and the Discovery of all the rest that went before, when the Reason of all difficult and perplexing Appearances shall be made plain, and the *manifold Wisdom* of God set in a clear Light ; to have our Minds employed about the greatest and best Things ; to walk with God, and keep a constant Communion with him, must needs be the sweetest, as well as the noblest Entertainment on this Side Heaven.

But,

But, besides the Entertainment it gives to our Minds, it presents to our Thoughts the Nature and Quality of the Happiness we are to enjoy above, *viz.* that it is a clear Vision, and ardent Love of God, who cannot be seen by him that *lives*, much less by him that *lives ill*. And this cannot fail of putting us upon thinking, that an Holy and Divine Frame of Spirit is absolutely requisite, not only as a *Condition* to our *Admission* into Heaven, but such a Condition likewise to our Enjoyment of it, that, without this Disposition, there is no being happy, even though we were in it. And, from this Consideration, a Man naturally passes, to fit himself for the Enjoyment of his Maker, *to purify himself, as he is pure*, and to purge and spiritualise his Nature, that so he may be qualified for the refined Joys above.

With what Pleasure then should we think of these great and glorious Things, which God hath prepared for them that love him; of that Inheritance, *incorruptible, undefiled, which fadeth not away, reserved for us in the Heavens!* How should we welcome the Thoughts of that happy Hour, when we shall be removed from all the Troubles and Temptations of a wicked and ill-natured World; when we shall be past all Storms, and safely landed in the Regions of Bliss and Immortality! O blessed Time! (may the good Christians say) when *Mortality shall be swallowed up of Life*, and we shall enter upon the Possession of that Happiness and Glory, which God hath promised, and our Faith hath believed, and our Hopes have raised us to the Expectation of; when we shall be eased of all our Pains, and resolved of all our Doubts, and purged from all our Sins, and freed from all our Fears; made happy beyond our Hopes, and have all that Happiness secured to us, beyond the Power of Time or Chance: When we shall know God, and love him
without

without Measure, and serve and praise him without Weariness, and obey him without Reluctancy, and still be more and more delighted in knowing, and loving, and praising, and obeying him to all Eternity. *Blessed is the Man whom thou chusest, O Lord, and receivest unto thee: He shall dwell in thy Courts, and shall be satisfied with the Pleasures of thy House, even of thy holy Temple.*

SECT. II.

Of external Duties to God, and,

I. OF PRAYER.

PRAYER is a solemn Act of worshipping the supreme Being; whereby we recognise his *eternal Power and Godhead*; whereby we acknowledge that he is the Creator and Governor of the World; that we absolutely, in every Respect, depend on him; that *every good and perfect Gift cometh from him*; and that, in all our Exigencies, he is ready to hear, and able to relieve us. So that the Reason of our making our Requests known unto God, is founded upon the Belief of his infinite *Goodness*, which disposes him to grant the Petitions of his Servants; of his unlimited *Power*, which enables him to fulfil all their Desires; and of his *Truth* and Veracity, which make it impossible for him not to keep the Promises which he hath made, *of giving to those that ask*. This is the Duty: And, I. The Grounds and Reasonableness hereof; together, II. With the Conditions requisite to make it an acceptable Service to God, will be the Scope of this Discourse.

I. It has been the Opinion of the best and wisest Men of all Ages, that the chief Design of making
Man

Man was, that there might be a Being able to apprehend and set forth the Glory of God in these lower Regions ; for the Creation seemed to be imperfect, and the Glory, which redounds to God from his Works, obscure, while there was no Creature able to take Notice of them. Man therefore, the last, best Work of God, was formed to supply this Want ; and, as all other Creatures were made for his Use and Entertainment, he himself was set apart for the Service and Worship of God. To this End he was endued with the *angelic* Faculty of *Understanding*, and the no less useful and noble Instrument of *Speech*, by which he was capable of cloathing his Thoughts with outward Expressions, that, by his Reason, he might apprehend, and, by his Voice, celebrate the Divine Perfections ; and, as the *Priest of Nature*, offer up the Sacrifice of Praise and Thanksgiving for the whole Creation. And into what Raptures of Admiration, into what Expressions of Gratitude, may we suppose the *first Man* to break forth, when he awaked out of the Dust into Being, and beheld this goodly Fabrick of the World, and himself the greatest and happiest Creature in it ! Whence the Order, whence the Beauty, whence the Variety of this blissful Paradise around him ; nay, whence himself ? Such wonderful Effects must necessarily raise him up to contemplate the first Cause, from whence they flowed ; and we may piously presume, that the first Time he opened his Lips was to shew forth his Creator's Praise.

Thus early did the Duty of Praise and Thanksgiving to God begin, commanded by no Laws, enforced by no Motives, but those of Gratitude and Inclination. For our first Parents had no Wants to be relieved, no Grievances to be redressed ; even their Desires for future Mercies were *prevented*, and all they could ask of God, in that
blissful

blissful State, was only the Continuance of it. But when unhappily they fell from their Innocence, and thereupon contracted Guilt, and intailed Misery upon their Posterity, Supplication and Prayer became the necessary Duty of Mankind; and so will continue, as long as we have Infirmities to be healed, and Wants to be relieved, and Sins to be pardoned, which will be as long as we abide in this State of Mortality. Our *Dependence* upon God makes it necessary to sue to him for what we want, as well as to give him Praise for what we have: Our *Guilt*, by making us subject to his Justice, prompts us to seek his Favour by humble Contrition for Sin, and earnest Desire of his Pardon: Our *Infirmities* and Temptations shew us, how absolutely needful it is to be assisted by his Grace, both to recover ourselves by true Repentance, and to persevere in doing the Things that he requires: And, lastly, the common *Ties* of Humanity and the Religion of Charity oblige us to pray for one another, as well as for ourselves: So that natural Light discovers this Duty, and shews it through all the Ways of *Invocation*, or Calling upon God.

And accordingly, if we look into the *Heathen* World, we shall find, that no Nation was ever yet so rude and barbarous, as not to have some Form of religious Worship; and that, however the Vulgar might differ in the *Object* of their Adoration, the wisest, in most Nations, were generally of the *Roman* Orator's Opinion; "That the Nature of God may justly challenge the Worship of Men, because of its superlative Excellence, Blessedness, and Eternity; and that whoever doubts or denies this (as *Aristotle* asserts) ought not to be dealt with by Arguments, but by Punishments." Their Acknowledgment therefore was, that all their Actions should begin with the
Gods,

Gods, and that a Blessing could not be derived upon them, without imploring their Aid; nay, that the Sacrifices were not duly offered, nor the Gods rightly worshipped, without Prayer. The *Stoics* indeed, who imputed so much to their own Strength, seemed to exclude the Divine Assistance, and, in Consequence of that, to shut out Prayer; but we find them frequently retracting this Opinion, and teaching their Disciples, that, *as no Man can be good without God*, so their Business was, *to pray for Health of Mind and Body, but more especially for the former*. And indeed, whatever some profligate People may pretend, and, in the Height of their Jollity, say to themselves, *Who is the Almighty, that we should fear and call upon him?* There are some certain Intervals, *viz.* when Anguish and Distress come upon them, and all human Means of Relief and Support fail, that they will naturally *cry unto God*, and endeavour to take Sanctuary in his All-sufficiency: Insomuch that it may justly be questioned, whether ever there was a Sinner, so wicked and obdurate, who, in the last Efforts of Life, (could we but see what passed *within*) was able to overcome all secret Prayer, and Motion of the Soul towards God.

And indeed, if we consider the Matter rightly, what can we suppose more reasonable, than that the sovereign Lord of all the World should be acknowledged by us? That we, who do continually depend upon him, should, ever and anon, be looking up to him, and expressing that Dependence? For is it not fit, that we, who every Moment experience a thousand Instances of his Kindness, partake of a thousand Mercies and Favours from his Hand, and must perish the next Minute, unless they be continued to us; is it not highly fit and reasonable, I say, that we should take Notice of these Things to our bounteous Benefactor? We should think it very ill Manners to pass by our
Prince,

Prince, or even any of our *Betters*, without saluting them, or, some Way or other, testifying our Respect to them, though they had no Way particularly obliged us; but, if we are beholden to them for our *Daily Bread*, to come into their Presence without taking Notice of them, or their Bounty to us, would be intolerable: How much more intolerable therefore must it be to pass by the Almighty, Day after Day, nay, to be in his Presence continually, (as indeed we always are) and yet neither pay any Homage and Reverence to him, as he is our *supreme Lord*, nor any Acknowledgments, as he is our *daily Preserver*? Especially considering, that this is one of the most delightful and honourable Employments that our Natures are capable of.

Vicious Men perhaps may have other Conceptions; but, as they have no Experience of Devotion, they are not competent Judges; those only, who have a good Sense and Relish of God upon their Minds, and have used and accustomed themselves to spiritual Exercises, can form right Notions of it: And to such we appeal, whether the Delights, and Satisfaction, and Consolation they receive from conversing with God, and an hearty pouring out their Souls unto him, be not inexpressible? Whether they do not find more Joy, and Peace, and Comfort, in their Attendance upon God's Service, either in publick or private, than ever they did from the Pleasures and Gratifications of any of their outward Senses. As much as the Soul is more pure and excellent than the Body, so much are the Pleasures and Gratifications of *that* more exquisitely delicious than those, which arise from corporeal Objects: But, of all the Pleasures of the Soul, those that it receives from the Communications of God, in the Exercise of Devotion, are incomparably the highest and most affecting; infomuch that, however we talk of Pleasures

and Enjoyments, we may truly affirm, that no Man ever found them, until he became acquainted with God; until he was made sensible of his Love, Parraker of his Favours, and lived in intire Communion with him, which is chiefly, if not only, exprest and maintained by Prayer, and other Exercises of Devotion.

We account it, and that very justly, a mighty Privilege and Dignity to be known to Princes and great Men; to have their Ear, and enjoy the Liberty of Access to them at all Times: But what is this to the Honour and Dignity we receive in having Leave given us, at all Times, to come into the Presence of the Great King of the Universe, whose Power and Goodness are infinite? That we, poor sinful Dust and Ashes, should be permitted to speak to so transcendent a Majesty! Nay, should have free Liberty given us to converse with him as with a Friend! to open all our Wants, to acquaint him with all our Concernments, to make known every Thought of our Hearts, and every Affair of our Lives to him! Nay, and to be assured, that he will be so far from taking amiss this Boldness in us, that he will favourably accept all our Applications, and make us as kind Returns as we ourselves can wish or desire! What greater Honour are we capable of than this? And how far are we sunk below all the Ambition of human Nature, when we will not take all Opportunities of thus honouring and doing Credit to ourselves, in making our Addresses to God? Especially considering, farther, the many great Benefits and Advantages that accrue to us hereby.

Of what singular Efficacy the due Performance of this Duty is, to procure all temporal Blessings, and avert all temporal Judgments, we are instructed in *Solomon's Prayer at the Dedication of the Temple*: *If thy People Israel be smitten down before the Enemy;*

Enemy; if Heaven be shut up, and there be no Rain; if there be in the Land Famine and Pestilence; or if thy People go out to Battle against their Enemy; then if they pray towards this Place, and confess thy Name, hear thou their Prayer and Supplication in Heaven thy Dwelling-place; deliver them from their Afflictions, and maintain their Cause. So that, according to the wise Man's Account, if Wars infest a Nation, Prayer is the surest Procurer of Peace or Victory; if Dearth or Famine rage in a Land, this restores Plenty and Abundance; if the *Heavens* be as *Brass*, and the *Earth* as *Iron*, this dissolves them, and makes them relent into Showers and Fatness; if the Pestilence reigns in the Streets, this holy Breathing can purge the Air, and dispel all noxious Vapours: In fine, whatever Calamities, whether private or publick, our Sins have drawn down upon us, a devout Performance of this Duty is able to remove them, and to secure the Blessing of God, both upon our Persons and our Labours, upon our *Basket* and *Store*, upon our Families, upon our Employments, and upon all that we either have or do. Nay, such is the Virtue of Prayer, that it makes every Thing we have a Blessing of God; and all the Actions of our *natural* or *civil* Life, however indifferent in themselves, turn into Acts of Religion.

To mention but one Benefit more, which naturally arises from a conscientious Practice of this Duty. As in Prayer we set our Wants and Infirmities continually before us, we solemnly place ourselves in the Presence of God, and call on him, who sees all our Actions; we enter into certain Purposes and Resolves against Sin; settle our Minds into Seriousness and Deliberation; abstract them from secular and worldly Affairs; and, by frequent conversing with God, are changed (gradually and insensibly changed) into his Image and Similitude; so it cannot be doubted, but that this Exercise must

needs be highly subservient to the Purposes of *Holiness*, as it produces Humility and Heavenly-Mindedness in us, Care and Vigilance in our Conduct, a reverential Fear of God in our Minds, and a Resemblance of the Divine Perfections in our Nature. Nay, so very conducive is this one Duty towards a Life of Godliness, that we may venture to lay down these three Things for undoubted Truths. 1. That it is impossible for any Man to be *good*, that lives without constant Prayer. 2. That whosoever is *good* at present, if he disuses himself to this Duty, will not continue good long. And, 3. That whoever makes a Conscience of praying frequently and heartily, and continues so to do, though he cannot, at present, be said to be a *good Man*, yet it is impossible for him long to continue *bad*. He will certainly, at last, get the Victory over his Lusts and ill Habits; since *his praying*, as one expresses it, *will either make him leave sinning, or sinning make him leave praying*.

“ But, if God be so omniscient a Being as to
 “ know what we stand in Need of without our
 “ telling him, or where we are pressed without
 “ our complaining, what Reason is there for our
 “ acquainting him with our Wants or Calamities?
 “ And, if he be an infinitely good and kind Being,
 “ more ready to give than we are to ask or receive,
 “ what Occasion for urging and soliciting him to
 “ do what his own *essential* Goodness will prompt
 “ him to do for us without our asking? Especially
 “ considering, that he is an unchangeable Being,
 “ the same *Yesterday, To-day, and for ever*; the
 “ same not only in his Nature and Essence, but
 “ also in his Counsels and Purposes. What he
 “ hath once resolved he steadily executes; and is
 “ not therefore to be moved by the Prayers and
 “ Supplications of clamorous and importunate
 “ Petitioners.” Now, in Answer to all this, it
 may

may be observed, that, though the Knowledge of God be such, that he cannot but be sensible of all our Wants and Distresses, nor can we tell him any Thing that he did not know before, yet it is but fit and reasonable, that, as we are really in Want, we should own our Wants to him; that, as we are really dependent upon him, we should acknowledge that Dependence; acknowledge, I say, that we are indigent and impotent Creatures; that we need many Things, and what Things they are that we need; that we cannot supply our own Wants, and that God alone is able to supply them. All this, I say, God knows as well, nay much better, than we do: But, nevertheless, it is but fit and becoming us, that we should profess and own what we know to be true, and freely declare the Sense of our own Weakness, and his All-sufficiency. In like Manner, though the Goodness of God be infinite, so that we can set no Bounds to it, yet may it be truly said to be limited by his own Wisdom and Justice; and therefore, should he be so indulgent as to give us every Thing we wanted, without asking, however this might magnify his Indulgence, it might seem to affect his Wisdom; since hereby we might forget our Dependence on him, and impute his Blessings either to fortuitous Events, or the natural Course of Things: Whereas now, when good Things are, in a great Measure, withheld from Men till they pray for them, and are made the Consequence, as it were, of their Petitions, by this they perceive from whose Hand *every good and perfect Gift cometh*; and by this they are convinced, how highly it concerns them to endeavour to procure his Favour and Good-will. And so again, though the Purposes of God be unchangeable, yet are they not so *absolute* as to exclude all Conditions. He determines to supply the Wants of his Creatures; but then they must be such as

are qualified to receive such Supply. Now, among the Qualifications which he requires in those whose Wants he is determined to supply, the very chief of all is our Dependence upon him, and an intire Confidence in his Goodness and Bounty; and the proper Expression of his Trust and Dependence is our *looking up unto God, from whom cometh our Help.*

There is indeed a Temper in Men that affects to be courted and flattered, and fawned upon, and complies with the Requests of others out of mean and little Ends: But this is the Effect of Pride, and Passion, and Interest, much different from these Condescensions of Almighty God; who, though he cannot be subject either to Weakness or Corruption, may yet be prevailed upon by such Methods as become a reasonable, and wise, and generous Mind. And therefore, when Men pay the Homage due to his infinite Majesty; when they throw themselves intirely upon his Goodness, cast all their Care-upon him, commit their Souls and all their Concerns into his Hands, and that with such devout and strong Persuasions of his being a faithful Creator, that no Delays, no Refusals can tempt them to suspect or distrust him; this is such an Inducement to help and favour People in Distress, as every great Spirit, every Man of Honour and common Good-nature, would think it a Fault not to comply with. So that for God to shew himself flexible, upon such Occasions, is not a Thing chargeable with *Fickleness* or Inconstancy, but rather a gracious Compliance, upon just and reasonable Motives; and to harden himself against the Cries and Complaints of Suitors, thus qualified, would much less become the *Character* of the sovereign Judge, and infinitely good Ruler of the World. It is a gross Conception therefore to imagine, that our Prayers are *troublesome* to him, as

the Requests of importunate *Beggars* are to us: For, though such People as say nothing of their Poverty may be more proper Objects of our Charity than noisy and clamorous Suitors are, yet it is certainly just in God to overlook the Necessities of those who are above asking a Supply, and to grant the Requests of those only, who, with full Assurance of Hope, fly unto him for Help in the Time of Need; since this is the Language of the Scripture: *The Lord is nigh unto all them, and them only, that call upon him; he will fulfil the Desire of them that fear him; he will also bear their Cry, and will save them.* Which leads us to consider,

II. The Conditions requisite to make our Prayers an acceptable Service to God. That an inward and true Sense of Piety is absolutely necessary to recommend our Prayers to God, is an evident Principle of Natural Religion; for *this we know, that God heareth not Sinners; but, if any Man be a Worshipper of God, and doth his Will, him he heareth;* for which Reason the Apostle assures us, *that, if our Heart condemn us not, then have we Confidence towards God,* not only a general Confidence in his Favour, and the good Dispositions of his Providence towards us, but in his *particular Goodness*, when we address ourselves to him by Prayer; for so it follows in the next Words, *and whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his Commandments, and do those Things which are pleasing in his Sight.* That Purity of Intention, which is necessary to the Perfection of all other Christian Duties, is much more necessary and indispensable in this of Prayer, is apparent from hence, that, though this alone cannot render our Prayers acceptable to God, yet we are assured, that without it they will be unavailable: And therefore the Apostle acquaints us, that, as there are some who have not, because they ask not, so there are others who *ask and receive not,*

because they ask amiss, that they may consume, what they hope to receive, upon their Lusts.

If ever therefore we desire that our Prayers and Addresses should enter Heaven, and find Admittance to the Throne of Grace, we must be careful neither to *regard Iniquity in our Hearts*, nor any indirect End in our Intentions. Our Mind, wherewith we pray, must, first of all, be such as God delights in; our End for which we pray must be such as he approves; and then the Manner in which we pray must be such as he directs; which, according to the best Instructions that we have, must be, 1. With firm *Trust* in him to whom we pray. 2. Serious *Attention* of Mind whilst we pray. 3. A *fervent Desire* of what we pray for. 4. *Humility* in the Act of praying. And, 5. *Perseverance* in our Performance of it. The *Trust*, wherewith we offer up our Prayers, must bear Proportion to the sure Promises of God, on which it is to be built; our *Attention* to the Weight and Importance of that religious Duty about which we are employed; our *Fervency*, to the Earnestness of those Wants under which we labour; our *Humility*, to the Glory and Majesty of that Being to whom our Prayers are addressed; and our *Perseverance*, to the inestimable Value of those Blessings which we promise ourselves at last.

1. The Majesty of God indeed, upon our first Reflection, is more apt to strike Awe and Terror into our Souls, than to give us any Trust and Confidence in our Approaches to him. If we take a View of our own Meanness, and his Glory; of our own Sinfulness, and his Purity; and go about to measure the immense Distance there is between him and his Creature; and, if possible, the still more immense Distance between a sinful Creature and that immaculate Being who *hateth all Iniquity*; it will seem Presumption enough to pray unto him, without

out adding to it yet the greater Confidence of hoping, of trusting, that the Prayers of such impotent, such mean, such wretched Supplicants shall work upon so powerful, so sublime, so awful a Majesty. But when our Approaches to him are in Obedience to his Command; when our Hopes are built upon his sure Mercies; when our Confidence is supported by his express Promises; we cannot withdraw ourselves from his Presence, without Violation of his *Authority*; we cannot despair of Acceptance, without Derogation to his *Goodness*; we cannot doubt of Success, without Distrust of his *Veracity*. Whatever Arguments therefore can be offered, to weaken our Faith, or stagger our Hopes, or shake our Confidence, are all answered by this gracious Promise of our Saviour, *I say unto you, what Things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them*; for, be the Things we desire never so great, they are not without the Compass of his *Omnipotence* to grant; be they never so disproportioned to our Deserts, they do not surpass the Bounds of his Merits.

2. Attention of Mind is another Qualification of an acceptable Prayer; and a Qualification it is, not so easy to be attained as we may imagine. If we consider the Make and Frame of our Souls, and attend a little to what passes within us, we find, that there is a certain Train of Thoughts; which are constantly on Float in our Minds, some going, and others quickly succeeding in their Room; so that, when we take most Care to keep our Thoughts from roving, we find it not easy to settle and fix what, in its own Nature, is so wandering and volatile. God therefore, who expects that we should serve him, in Proportion only to the Strength of those Faculties wherewith he hath endued us, will, no Doubt, graciously pardon our unavoidable Infirmities, our involuntary Wanderings, and the ungovernable

ungovernable Distractions of our Thoughts. But, though God's Mercy will certainly acquit us from the Imputation of Guilt for such Defects as, from the Infirmary of our Natures, are unavoidable, yet it will in no Case clear us in Respect of those Wanderings of Thought which are affected and voluntary. When, through the Power of our Lusts, or the Cares of the World, our Minds are so totally immersed in sensual and carnal Things, that we cannot call them off to spiritual and religious Duties; when, for want of due Care and Attention, we set our Thoughts adrift, as it were, and suffer them, without Check or Controul, to wander at Random; when, before our Entry upon this solemn Duty, we neither prepare ourselves for it, by imprinting on our Souls venerable and awful Notions of the transcendent Majesty of that supreme Being to whom we approach, nor, during our religious Exercise, retain a lively Sense of the exceeding Glory of that God before whom we stand; when the Words, in short, we pour forth, are vain empty Sounds, unaccompanied with any inward Conceptions answering to them; such wandering and distracted Prayers as these are so far from being a *reasonable Service*, which alone is *acceptable unto God*, that the Royal Preacher calls them the Sacrifice of Fools, and thereupon subjoins this good Advice, *Keep thy Foot, i. e. thy Thoughts and Affections, when thou goest into the House of God; Be not rash with thy Mouth, and let not thine Heart be hasty to utter any Thing before God; for God is in Heaven, and thou upon Earth.*

The Apostle, in the telling us, that *the effectual fervent Prayer of a righteous Man availeth much*, does not only suppose an intense Devotion in Prayer to be a Duty, but a Means likewise to recommend it more effectually to the Favour and Acceptance of God. Real Want, where there is
a quick

a quick Sense of it, will find a Way of expressing itself in such a Manner, as to excite Pity ; and therefore, if we are thoroughly conscious to ourselves of our own Indigence, of our utter Inability to supply our pressing Wants, and our necessary Dependence on God, who alone can supply them, this deep Sense of our Necessities will make us warm and vehement for Relief. *As the Hart panted after the Water-Brook, so David's Soul panted after God ; his Soul thirsted for God ; his Flesh longed for him, in a dry and thirsty Land ; his Soul longed, yea, even fainted for the Courts of the Lord.* The Panting of a Hart wearied, pursued, and spent, the Drought of parched and gaping Land, the Gravings of Hunger and Thirst, and the Faintings and Longings of a Woman with Child, are proper and lively Images of an eager and affectionate Concern for those Blessings, which the Holy Psalmist thus earnestly desired. This is the Life and true Spirit of Devotion, which ascends up, and takes Heaven, as it were, by Violence : And for this Reason very likely our Prayers are called, in Scripture, a *Sacrifice*, and *Incense*, because they become acceptable, by the self-same Methods, that those were used to be of old. It is Burning that creates the *sweet-smelling Savour* ; and it must be the Earnestness and Warmth of our Prayers, that alone can make them *come up as Incense before the Throne of God.*

4. Another Property, necessary and essential to give Success and Efficacy to our Prayers, is *Humility*, which arises from the Nature of the Duty itself : For since, by Prayer we acknowledge ourselves to be indigent and dependent Creatures, Want, one would think, is a sure Remedy against *Pride*, as Dependence is a Motive to be humble. Access indeed we have, and are commanded to *come with Boldness to the Throne of Grace* ; but it should

should always be remembered, that it is a *Throne of Grace*, because the *Seat of Judgment*, not any of us is able to stand before; that Mercy is the only Thing we can pretend to, and that even this is, in no Degree, due to us for our own Sakes, but purely upon the Account of *another*, who purchased it for us at the Price of his own Blood; that therefore, if we obtain our Petitions, this is an Excess of Bounty; but if we wait long, or be denied, God is Master of his Favours, and *may do what he will with his own*. So that every Thing that may conduce to the laying us low in our Thoughts, every Thing that may help to speak our Modesty, and Reverence, and Submission, is all little enough for Creatures so despicable by Nature, and by Sin so detestable as we, suing for Blessings, that they deserve not, and for Mercies, that they have no Right to.

5. One Condition more of the final Success and Validity of our Prayers is Patience and Perseverance: For though God, for the Trial of our Faith, and the Improvement of our Humility; for the Manifestation of our Trust in him, and Submission to his Will; for the Increase of the Value of his Blessings, and the clearer Demonstration of our intire Dependence on his Goodness and Bounty; may think it proper sometimes to delay the Answer to our Prayers; yet must we not, upon that Account, despair of the Acceptance of our renewed Addresses. The Relenting of the *unjust Judge* stands upon Record in Scripture, as a plain Instance of the irresistible Force of Perseverance in Prayer. *He neither feared God, nor regarded Man; and yet, because this Widow troubleth me, saith he, I will avenge her, lest, by her continual Coming, she weary me.* Now, though it were Blasphemy to think that God acts upon the same Motives with this *unjust Judge*; yet this we may learn from the Nature

Nature of the Parable, that if a Man, who neither *fears God*, nor *regards Men*, who hath neither any Sense of Religion or Humanity, may be supposed to be so far prevailed upon, by the earnest Prayer of a miserable necessitous Person, as to grant the Request made to him, and to administer Relief to the Supplicant, merely upon the Account of the Continuance and Importunity of the Petitions that are put up : How much more ought we to think, that God, who is infinite Goodness itself ; who is always kind and bountiful to his Creatures ; who delights to do them good, even without their desiring it ; and who is able to do them good with much less Pains, than they request it : How much more ought we to think, I say, that this God, upon our earnest and hearty Prayer to him, for any Thing we stand in Need of, will return us a kind Answer, and grant us such Supplies as are proper for us ? But then we are to remember, that we *pray always*, and *faint not* ; that we be diligent, importunate, and persevering in our Devotions ; otherwise, we are not to expect any more favourable Return of them, than the Judge, in the Parable, made to the Widow, upon her first or second Application to him.

These are some of the chief Qualifications that give Wings to our Prayers, and Strength to our Addresses : And, that they may never fail of a kind Acceptance, we must be mindful at all Times to offer them up in the Name of *our Lord Jesus Christ*. Having therefore not only a gracious God, *who heareth Prayers*, when offered up in a due and regular Manner, but a merciful Redeemer likewise, *through whom we have Access to the Father* ; let us draw near with a *true Heart*, in full Assurance of Faith, *having our Hearts sprinkled from an evil Conscience* : And praying always with all Prayer and Supplication

plication in the Spirit; let us watch thereunto with all Perseverance.

2. Of publick and private Prayer.

IF we consider the *Matter* of Prayer, we may distinguish it into Prayer for *spiritual*, and Prayer for *temporal* good Things; or into Prayer for *ourselves*, and Intercession for *others*: If we consider the *Manner* of Prayer, we may distinguish it into *mental*, which is, when we pray only with our Hearts, without uttering or expressing any Words; and *vocal*, which is, when we express in Words, and utter with our Mouths the Desires of our Hearts: But the only Distinction that we shall at present insist on, is that of *publick* Prayer, which is, when we join with others in putting up our *common* Petitions; and *secret* Prayer, when, retired from all Company, we put up our private Petitions to God; and these, though for Matter and Substance the same, are yet two *distinct* Duties, and both necessary to be performed, as Occasion calls for them.

The Church is God's House, the Place on Earth of his immediate Residence, and he hath promised, that, *when two or three are met together in his Name, he himself will be in the Midst of them*: In the Closet however we do not shut ourselves up from his all-seeing Eye; since our Saviour hath assured us, that, *if we pray in secret, our Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward us openly*. The fittest Place to acknowledge publick Mercies, and implore the common Blessings of Life, is in *publick*, where the united Prayers of a Congregation are supposed to be more prevalent with Heaven, than single Petitions: But there are some Favours we want, which it does not become us there to ask; some Wounds to be healed, which are not to be exposed to publick
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lick View; common Decency instructs us to reserve these for our private Hours: Nor can we ever properly descend into ourselves, to know the true State of our Souls; but when we *commune with our Hearts in our Chamber, and are still*. In the Church, general Mercies are implored, and general Blessings acknowledged; but then there is no confessing our Guilt in all its Circumstances, or affecting our Souls there with that holy Grief, which can only work a thorough Repentance: Whereas, in the *Closet*, we are at Liberty to indulge ourselves in all the Expressions of Sorrow; and the pious Soul may let itself loose to all the Fervour of Devotion, which, at the *Altar*, is so far from being praise-worthy, that it is highly blameable and indecent: For every Thing that is singular in publick, every Thing that draws the Eyes and Observation of others upon us, favours of *Hypocrisy* and *Ostentation*, and is forbidden by our Saviour's Command of *not performing any Duty, that we may be seen of Men*. But when we are under the Inspection of no Eye, but that of God, who *spies out all our Ways, and understands our Thoughts, long before they are formed*, the more fervent our Devotions are, the more acceptable they are to him, because there can be no Reason to suspect the Sincerity of them: For we can never entertain such unworthy Notions of God, as to imagine, that we can, by any Artifice, deceive him, and make him believe that *we honour him with our Lips, when we know ourselves, that our Hearts are far from him*. So that, though by a false Zeal, and pretended Sanctity in publick, we may prevail upon others to have a better Opinion of us, than we really deserve; yet there is no Fear but that we shall act sincerely, when we address ourselves in private to God; and then our Zeal cannot be too high, nor our Devotions too much inflamed, so long as they proceed from Sincerity,

cerity, and are equally tempered with Fervour and Humility.

There is this farther Advantage of Retirement, that it is of singular Use to fix our Attention, which, by the Variety of the Objects we meet with in publick, is often broke and divided; and that we are less subject to spiritual Languors, when we are at Liberty to make Use of our own Thoughts and Expressions, to leave off when our Attention flags, and return to it again, at a more favourable Opportunity: But then we want in the Closet that awful Reverence, that Solemnity of Devotion, with which the Church inspires us. *There the Beauty of Holiness* appears in its brightest Lustre, charms the Eyes, and inflames the Hearts of all Beholders. For what a decent, what an agreeable, what a ravishing Sight is a well-ordered Congregation, offering up their Prayers, with one Consent, and with one Voice, to their great Creator; laying aside all Distinctions of rich and poor, mean and noble, and resolving all their Differences into a pious Emulation of excelling each other in the Love of God, and Zeal for his Service? Certainly, if we could form to ourselves any faint Image or Representation of Heaven here on Earth, we must draw the *Model* of it, though in an infinite lower Degree, from the Uniformity and Order, the Reverence and Devotion of religious Assemblies; which, besides their Resemblance, have so necessary a Dependence on the other, that, to frequent the Service of the *Sanctuary*, to join in the religious Exercises of the *Church militant on Earth*, is the best Means to fit and prepare us to be worthy Members of the *Church triumphant in Heaven*.

But here a Question may arise, "In what Manner it is most expedient for us to make our Addresses to God in the publick Congregation; whether in *set Forms*, or *extemporary Inventions*;"

"and

“ and which serves the Ends of our Devotion best,
 “ one *common Liturgy*, or Words and Expressions
 “ *every Day new.*” That *set Forms* of Prayer are
 no where prohibited in Scripture, nay, that, in
 some Places, they are expressly commanded and
 prescribed, is evident to every one, that is con-
 versant in the Writings of either *Testament*. In the
 Old Testament, we find the Lord speaking unto
Moses thus, *Speak unto Aaron, and unto his Sons,*
saying, On this wise ye shall bless the Children of Is-
rael, saying unto them, The Lord bless thee, and keep
thee; the Lord make his Face to shine upon thee; the
Lord lift up his Countenance upon thee, and give thee
Peace; nor can we suppose, that God was less
 ready to vouchsafe his Blessing to the People, be-
 cause his Minister always implored it in the same
 Form of Words. And as the Priests, under the
 Law, were required to bless the People in a set
 Form, so were the People sometimes enjoined to
 offer up their Prayers to God in Words that were
 prepared before-hand for them. Thus, when a
 Murder was committed, and the Author of it un-
 known, the Elders of the adjoining City were di-
 rected to ask God's Pardon in this Form; *Our*
Hands have not shed this Blood, neither have our Eyes
seen it: Be merciful, O Lord, unto thy People Israel,
whom thou hast redeemed, and lay not innocent Blood
unto thy People of Israel's Charge: And so the Blood
was to be forgiven.

In the New Testament, we find our Saviour pre-
 scribing to his Disciples a *set Form* of Prayer, when
 he ordered them to pray *after this Manner; Our*
Father, &c. For it was not only the Custom of
 the *Jews* in general to use *Forms of Prayer*, but
 for their *Doctors* likewise to teach their Scholars
 some particular Form, composed by them, in or-
 der to *distinguish* them from other People. In
 Compliance to this Custom, *John the Baptist, as*

it appears by the Place in *St Luke*, taught his Disciples a peculiar Form; and, for this Reason, one of our Saviour's Disciples comes and requests of him, that he would be pleased to compose one for their Use, *Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his Disciples*; upon which we find, that our Saviour complied with his Request, and accordingly prescribed them the Form, which he had given them before, as a *Pattern* of Prayer upon the *Mount*. And as our Saviour prescribed them this Form, 'tis hardly to be questioned, but that, in Obedience to his Command, they made Use of it, even though we have no express Declaration in Holy Writ, that they did so; because, we may observe farther, that, wherever we have any Prayers recorded, there is Presumption enough to believe, that they offered them up in a *set Form*. Thus we find the whole Company of *primitive Christians*, in Conjunction with the Apostles themselves, *lifting up their Voice with one Accord*, and saying, *Lord, thou art God, which hast made Heaven, and Earth, and the Sea, and all that is in them, &c.* And as they all joined, not only with their Hearts, but with their Voices; not only in the same Thoughts, but in the same Words; unless we will say, that all were immediately inspired to utter the same Syllables, for which there is no Ground in the History, nor any Probability in Reason, we must allow, that they prayed by a *Form* composed before-hand.

What has been said upon this Head is sufficient to shew, if not the *Necessity*, at least the *Lawfulness* of praying by a Form: For since God was pleased to prescribe Forms to be used in his publick Worship in the *Jewish Church*; since Christ taught his Disciples to pray after a Form; and they, upon sundry Occasions, in all Probability, made Use of premeditated Forms; it will undeniably follow, that

that to use set Forms of Prayer is not repugnant to the Will of God; is no *stinting of the Spirit*, no Impediment to Devotion, no Instance of *Superstition*, no Part of *forbidden Will-Worship*, no Invention of *Antichrist*, &c.

That *all Things should be done to the Glory of God*, we are very frequently warned in Scripture; and we may leave it to the Judgment of any sober Person, whether the Glory of God is best promoted by such Prayers, wherein strict Care is taken, that nothing should be uttered unbecoming the Divine Majesty, or by such *extemporary Conceptions*, wherein many unseemly and irreverent Speeches, at least, are too commonly, and, in a Manner unavoidably, poured forth. That *all Things should be done for Edification*, is another Scripture-Precept; and whether those Prayers, which are formed by the mature Advice of many Persons, eminent for Wisdom and Piety, and which are both known and understood by the People, or those, which are conceived, on a sudden, by one Man, whose Abilities, perhaps, are not very great, and which those, who join with them, must first study to understand, before they can concur therein, are most likely to edify the Church, can, with unprejudiced Persons, bear no Dispute. *If I know not the Meaning of the Voice*, says the Apostle, *I shall be unto him, that speaketh, a Barbarian, and he, that speaketh, shall be a Barbarian unto me*: Now the *Meaning of the Voice* may be as unknown to us, if a Prayer be made in a *Phrase*, as if it be made in a *Language* that we do not understand; and he, that prays in an *untelligible Manner*, is as much a *Barbarian* to those that hear him, as if he prayed in an *unknown Tongue*: So that, unless all Ministers are Masters of *Perspicuity*, which, perhaps, is a Talent as rare as any, then *he, that occupieth the Room of the Unlearned*, nay, he, indeed, that

is never so learned, may not always be able to say *Amen* to a Prayer, which he may not always be able to understand.

In a Word, if earnest Desires, if devout Affections, if close Attention and Fervour of Spirit do recommend our Prayers to God, all these Advantages may rather be hoped for by those, who, using a prepared and known Form, have nothing farther to do, than to excite, in their Minds, Passions suitable to the Business they are upon; than by such, who, depending wholly upon the Conceptions of another, must *first* endeavour to catch those Words, which fall from him; then be employed in finding out their Meaning; *then* consider whether that which is asked be lawful for them to ask, and whether they can heartily join with such a Petition, or Thanksgiving; which, before they can have determined in their own Thoughts, it may be too late for them to join in, because the Minister is, perhaps, by this Time, passed on to another quite different Matter. If therefore, by composed Forms, the Infirmities of some Men are best remedied; if our Consent and Communion with other Christians is hereby best testified; if Errors and Irregularities in Worship be by this Means best prevented; if they are most subservient to Edification, to true Devotion, and to the Glory of God; we may safely conclude, that a well-composed Form of publick Worship, in the Church, is not only lawful, but expedient, and in some Degree even necessary: And, upon this Account, we may well be allowed to congratulate our mutual Happiness, in being made Members of a Church, wherein there is so great a Treasure of rational Devotion; where all the Prayers are directed to a proper Object, all cloathed in proper and significant Language, and all disposed in exact and regular Order; where the *Praises* are lofty,
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and suitable to the Majesty of God ; the *Confessions* humble, and such as become Sinners ; the *Intercessions* comprehend all the Duties, and the *Supplications* are extended to all the Wants of Mankind : Where the Whole, indeed, is so admirably fitted to the common Concerns of a *Christian Society*, that when (as the *Rubrick* enjoins) we make but Use of some of them, our Worship is not *imperfect*, and, when we use them all, there is none of them *superfluous* : And therefore, if we be but careful to bring with us, to the House of God, such Affections as become his Saints, we need not doubt, but that we shall there find such Prayers to express these Affections in, as will prove a *reasonable Service*, and make the Whole an *Offering of a sweet-smelling Savour unto God*.

3. Of Praise and Thanksgiving.

PRAISE and *Thanksgiving*, though they are frequently used promiscuously, yet, in Strictness of Speech, have a different Signification. Our *Praise* properly terminates in God, on the Account of his natural Excellencies and Perfections, and is that Act of Devotion, by which we confess and admire his several Attributes ; but *Thanksgiving* is a narrower Duty, and imports only a grateful Sense and Acknowledgment of God's Mercies. We *praise* God for all his glorious Acts of every Kind, that regard either us, or other Men ; for his very Acts of Vengeance, and those Judgments, which he sometimes *sends abroad on the Earth* ; but, properly speaking, we *thank* him only for the Instances of his Goodness, and only for such Instances too, as we ourselves are, some Way or other, concerned in. This is properly the Distinction of the two Words : But, since the Language of the Scripture is generally less exact in this Matter, we, in

what follows, shall think ourselves at Liberty to use them in a promiscuous Sense; and accordingly shall enquire, I. What the Nature of that Duty implies; and, II. How reasonable a Thing it is, that we should perform it.

I. Now few are so ignorant, as not to know, that the Duty of Praise and Thanksgiving to God implies our having a lively and devout Sense of his Excellencies, and of his Benefits; our recollecting them with Humility and Thankfulness of Heart; and our expressing these inward Affections by suitable outward Signs; by Songs and Hymns, and spiritual Ejaculations, as well as by a Tenor of Life, led answerable to such Vouchsafements. When therefore we set ourselves down, and call to Remembrance the many Experiments we have had of God's Loving-kindness to us; when we dwell upon them by long Meditation, and imprint the Traces of them firm and indelible in our Minds; when we raise our Conceptions to a due Estimation of them, and, by attending to every Circumstance, improve their Value to the highest Pitch; when upon this our Heart glows with Love, and we feel ourselves carried to God by an affectionate Sense of what he has done for us; when, thereupon, our Lips overflow with Praise, and we cannot forbear expressing the Riches of his Goodness to us in all the outward Acknowledgments of Love and Gratitude; and lastly, when we order our Lives by the Rule of his Commands, and, in Return for his Favours, devote ourselves, both Soul and Body, to his Service; 'tis then that we offer unto him an acceptable Sacrifice of Thanksgiving.

And accordingly, if we look into the great Exemplar of Gratitude, the Royal Prophet *David*, we shall find him regulating his Praises to God after this very Method: *I will remember the Days*
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of old, says he, and meditate on all thy Works, and talk of all thy Doings. Bless the Lord, O my Soul, and forget not all his Benefits: Here is his deep Recollection of the Mercies of God. Then he goes on; I will praise thee, O Lord, among the People; I will sing unto thee among the Nations; for thy Mercy is great as the Heavens, and thy Faithfulness reaches unto the Clouds. How excellent is thy Loving-kindness, O God, how precious are thy Thoughts unto me, how great is the Sum of them! Here is his high Estimation of the divine Benefits. Then he proceeds; Because thy Loving-kindness is better than Life, my Lips shall praise thee, my Soul shall be filled with Marrow and Fatness, my Mouth shall praise thee with joyful Lips. Bless the Lord, O my Soul, and all that is within me praise his holy Name. Here is his grateful Resentment of the Kindness of God. Whereupon he breaks out, I will praise the Name of the Lord with a Song, I will magnify him with Thanksgiving. I will sing of the Mercies of the Lord for ever, with my Mouth will I make known thy Faithfulness to all Generations. And then, to compleat all, he deliberates, how he may yet farther testify his Gratitude to God: What shall I render unto God for all his Benefits? Whereupon he resolves, I will receive the Cup of Salvation, and call upon the Name of the Lord; I will pay my Vows unto him, even the Vows of Amendment and better Obedience, that I made unto him in my Distress. Thus plainly has the Psalmist chalked out the Duty, and taught us the Way to be thankful to our God. And,

II. How reasonable a Thing it is for us to comply with such Directions, we may perceive, by considering, 1. The Nature of God, as it is extended to us. 2. The Nature of Man, as it is related to God. And, 3. The Nature of the Duty itself.

1. Offer unto God *Thanksgiving*, says the Psalmist; to God, *i. e. to him*, who is the Author, Up-holder, and Preserver of our Being, without whose Goodness we had never been, and without whose Care we cannot subsist one Moment. *To him*, who hath created this spacious World for our Comfort and Delectation; given us Bodies of an excellent Order and Proportion, and inspired them with Souls, impressed with conspicuous Characters of his own divine Essence. *To him*, who grants us free Access, a constant Intercourse, and familiar Acquaintance with himself; styles us *his Friends* and *his Children*, and, in Pursuance of his *paternal* Relation to us, pities our Infirmities, assists our Wants, comforts our Sorrows, and asswages all our Pains. *To him*, whose *Goodness is like the strong Mountains*, and whose Mercies never fail, taking Care of us, when we regard not him; watching over us when we sleep, and remembering us, when we forget ourselves. *To him*, who, as St James expresses it, *giveth freely, and upbraideth no Man*; who exacts no costly, no difficult, no impossible Returns for his Favours, but only a cheerful Acknowledgment of them, and a sincere Performance of such Duties, as our own Welfare, did we but apprehend it, would abundantly bind us to. Is there any Thing more? Yes, *to him*, who, that he might redeem us from Misery, condescended to the lowest Humiliation, to inhabit our frail and mortal Nature; to undergo the Laws and Conditions of Humanity, and at last taste the bitter Cup of a most painful Death: Yea, *to him*, who not only descended from his imperial Throne, and became a Servant for our Sake, but designed thereby to exalt us to a Participation of his Royal Dignity, his divine Nature, his eternal Glory and Bliss, submitting Crowns and Scepters to our Choice; Crowns, that cannot fade, and Scepters, that

that can never be extorted from us. *To him*, lastly, whose Benefits to commemorate is the greatest Benefit of all ; whose Goodness to praise, whose Greatness to admire, whose Beneficence to feel, and whose Presence to enjoy, is Heaven itself, the Life of Angels, and the supreme Degree of all Felicity. In a Word, *to him*, whose Benefits are immensely great, innumerable many, and inexpressibly good ; for, *Who can utter the mighty Acts of the Lord, or shew forth all his Praise ?* Says one, who had spent most of his Thoughts, and the best of his Endeavours that Way.

2. Thus, if we look up to God, our great and only Benefactor, we cannot but perceive, that the Duty of Praise and Thanksgiving to him is bound upon us by Ties innumerable, and that the good Things we receive from above should, in grateful Acknowledgments, be sent back again thither, *as the Rivers run into the Sea ; to the Place, the Ocean of Beneficence, from whence the Rivers come, thither should they return again.* And, in like Manner, if we turn our Eyes upon ourselves, we cannot but remember, that we are his *Creatures*, sustained by his Alms, and fed by his Bounty ; that every Drop we drink, and every Morsel we eat, we receive from him ; that we breathe in his Air, move on his Earth, and are every Moment supported by his all-powerful Arm. Nay, we are not only his *Creatures*, and Pensioners to his Bounty, but *sinful* *Creatures* likewise, that abuse his Kindness, and pervert his Blessings. For he gives us Breath, and we blaspheme him with it ; he gives us Health, and we expend it in Intemperance ; he gives us Wealth, and we consume it upon our Lusts ; and yet, for all this, he continues to be gracious unto us, and passes by many Indignities, as if his *Long-suffering* were never to have an End. Nay, we are his *redeemed* *Creatures*, who had the Honour

Honour to have our Lives ransomed by the precious Blood of the Son of God ; and, from the Power of Sin, and the Slavery of our most inveterate Enemy, are set free ; set free the noblest Way, not so much as the *Spirit of Bondage* remaining, but are so become the Servants, as, at the same Time, to obtain the glorious *Liberty of the Sons of God*. Can we rise any higher ? Yes, we are to be his *glorified* Creatures, to be admitted into the Society of Saints and Angels, where, having our Bodies fashioned like unto Christ's glorious Body, and our Souls exalted to a Participation of God, we shall *be blessed with all spiritual Blessings, in heavenly Places, in Christ*. If then there be any Force in God's *creating* Goodness ; if any Bonds in his *forbearing* Patience ; if any Endearments in his *redeeming* Love ; if any Obligations in the Hope of our high Calling ; by these, all these, are we bound to make thankful Returns to him, from whom we have received, and from whom we expect so much : Especially considering, that there are other Inducements arising from the Nature of this Duty itself, that engage us to the Practice of it.

3. The Royal Psalmist has given us a good Account of the general *Properties* of Praise and Thanksgiving, under which most of its chief Advantages may be comprised. *Praise the Lord, for it is good to sing Praises unto our God ; for it is pleasant, and Praise is comely. Praise the Lord, for it is good*, as it enlarges the Powers and Capacities of our Souls, turning them, from little and low Things, upon their greatest and noblest Object, the divine Nature ; and employing them in the Discovery and Admiration of those several Perfections that adorn it. *It is good*, as it promotes and facilitates the Practice of all other Duties, insomuch that, whoever is under a powerful Sense of God's Goodness

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(as the truly thankful always are) will, with the greatest Chearfulness, *run the Ways of God's Commandments*, because he has a Principle in him which converts the most painful Duties into the most delightful Recreations. *It is good*, as it gives a great Support to our Hope and Dependence on God : For, besides that the Consciousness of having made thankful Returns for what we have received will be a great Consolation to us in the Time of our Distress, the very Remembrance and Recollection of God's former Favours, which our grateful Sense of them will not fail to impress in our Minds, will prove a constant Fund of happy Experience, for our Assurance in him to live upon for the future. *It is good*, as it heightens and improves the Enjoyment of God's Benefits to such a Degree that, whilst the Unthankful, for Want of a due Estimate of his Favours, live dissatisfied, those that have a grateful Sense of his Goodness to them, feed upon every Blessing with Content. Once more, *it is good*, because it mightily obliges God to continue and repeat his Favours to us : For, seeing he is the freest and most generous Benefactor in the World, we may depend upon it, that, if we make the good Use of his Benefits for which he designed them, if we render such grateful Returns for them as are both delightful to him and beneficial to ourselves, he will be so far from withdrawing his Hand from us for the future, that he *will rejoice over us to do us good*, and be as highly pleased to multiply his Benefits upon us as we can be to receive them.

2. Another Commendation of the Duty is this ; *Praise the Lord, for it is pleasant*, as it pursues the natural Bent and Inclination of our Minds ; which are never more *easy* and delighted than when we are able to make grateful Returns for the Favours we have received. *It is pleasant*, as it proceeds from Love, the Fountain of Pleasure, the Passion which

which gives every Thing we do and enjoy its Relish and Agreeableness; and from *Thankfulness*, which involves in it the Memory of past Benefits, and is, as it were, a repeated Enjoyment of them. *It is pleasant*, as it procures Quiet and Ease to the Mind, by delivering it of those Thoughts of Praise and Gratitude, those Exultations it is full of, and which would grow uneasy and troublesome to it, if they were kept in; for, were the Thankful *restrained* from making Mention of God's Mercies, it would be *Pain* and *Grief* to them; but then, then, is *their Soul satisfied with Marrow and Fatness, when their Mouth praiseth him with joyful Lips.*

In other Parts of our Devotion there is something painful and laborious to human Nature: *Prayer* awakens in us a sorrowful Sense of Wants and Imperfections, and *Confession* induces a sad Remembrance of our Guilts and Miscarriages; but *Thanksgiving* has nothing in it but a warm Sense of the mightiest Love and the most endearing Goodness, as it is the Overflow of an Heart full of Love, the free Sally and Emission of Soul that is captivated and endeared by Kindness. We, indeed, in this State of our Defection, are, in a great Measure, unacquainted with the Pleasure and Sweetness of this blessed Work; and the Reason is, because we have not a quick Sense and lively Relish of the Divine Goodness, upon which it terminates. Had we this always present with us, we should feel so much Joy and Pleasure in Thanksgiving, that it would be our Heaven upon Earth to breathe up our Souls to God in Praise: But this we know, who know any Thing of Religion, that *to laud and magnify the Lord* is the End for which we were born, and the Heaven for which we were designed; and that, when we are arrived to such a vigorous Sense of the Divine Love, as the blessed Inhabitants of Heaven have attained, we shall need no other, either

ther Pleasure or Employment, to make us for ever happy, but only to sing eternal Praises and *Hallelujahs to our God, and to the Lamb that sitteth upon the Throne*: The vigorous Relish of whose unspeakable Goodness to us will so inflame our Love and animate our Gratitude, that, to eternal Ages, we shall never be able to refrain from breaking out into new Songs of Praise; and then every new Song will create a new Pleasure, and every new Pleasure dictate a new Song, and so round again, for ever and ever. But these Things are too sublime for our present Comprehension: Only let us consult the Experience of such as make this Part of Devotion their constant Business, and they will assure us, that there is nothing under Heaven so pleasant and delightful, as, from a warm and vigorous Sense of the Love of God, to breathe up our Souls to him in Praise and Thanksgiving; that this gives such Joy to the Mind, such Recreation to the Heart, as far exceeds the most studied artificial Pleasures of Sensuality. *Praise the Lord, for the Lord is good: Sing Praises to his Name, for it is pleasant.*

3. The other Commendation of this Duty is, that *Praise is comely*; as certainly a more becoming Exercise cannot be conceived than this, wherein the best Instruments of *Nature* are employed in the highest Offices of *Grace*; our Hearts in recollecting, and our Tongues in relating the Loving-kindness of God. To have the Great King of Heaven and Earth surrounded with loud Acclamations of his joyful Subjects, his Excellence proclaimed and exalted above the highest Praise, his wonderful Works magnified and admired in triumphant Acknowledgments, and his Bounty and Love celebrated and adored with Songs and Magnificans; what an Emblem is here of the Blessed above! And what more graceful and comely Sight can we imagine, than a
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full Congregation of Saints, blessing and praising the Lord? Our Prayers are designed for the Relief of our Wants, our *Faith* leans upon some future Good, and our *Hope* is a comfortable Expectation of it; but *Praise* is a generous and unmercenary Principle, which proposes no other End to itself but to do, as is fit for a Creature endowed with such Faculties to do, towards the most perfect and beneficent of Beings, and to pay the willing Tribute of Honour there, where the Voice of Reason directs us to pay it. In short, Praise is the most excellent Part of our religious Worship, the common Work of the Church, both *Militant* and *Triumphant*, the Source of Joy and Refreshment here, and the very Soul and Spirit of Heaven hereafter; the Perfections of God's Nature are its Object, and the very Act itself is the Perfection of ours. And therefore, whether it be for great or for small, for common or extraordinary, for present or past, for private or publick, for temporal or spiritual Blessings; whether it be for the Occurrences of Providence that are averse to our Desire, or for those that are accommodated to our Liking; in all States and Conditions, in all the Changes and Chances of Life, *let the Praises of God be ever in our Mouths*; and in our Mind this *Song of Moses, the Servant of the Lord*, and this *Song of the Lamb: Great and marvellous are thy Works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy Ways, thou King of Saints! Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy Name?*

C H A P. II.

Our Duty towards our Neighbour ; and,

1. Of Universal Love and Charity.

ST Paul, in his first Epistle to the *Corinthians*, has given us a Description of this great Christian Duty, as it relates to our Neighbour, which far exceeds any *Delineation* that we can possibly devise. *Charity suffereth long, and is kind ; Charity envieth not ; Charity vaunteth not itself ; is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no Evil, rejoiceth not in Iniquity, but rejoiceth in the Truth ; beareth all Things, believeth all Things, hopeth all Things, endureth all Things : So that, to explain the Nature and Properties of this Virtue, we need only give a short Comment upon the Apostle's Words ; and then proceed, 1. To shew the Obligations of it ; and, 2. the Measures and Inducements of our performing it.*

1. Charity suffereth long. The Man that is possessed of this excellent Grace is not apt, quickly, and upon every slight Occasion, to conceive a Displeasure, much less to meditate Revenge against those who behave themselves ill towards him. He considers how subject to *Frailties* Mankind are, how easily betrayed, by Infirmities, and Surprize, and Passion, to Things that are inordinate : He makes just *Allowances* therefore for Inadvertencies and Indiscretions, and suppresses his Resentment for Wrongs, that are avowed and manifest, so long as they continue to be tolerable : And in this he differs from the jealous and captious, the peevish and hasty, who either fancy themselves injured and affronted when nothing like it is intended, or take fire upon every light Provocation and Neglect.

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2. *Charity is kind*; and therefore he that is Master of his Temper, as he is slow in taking Offence, so is he sure not to give any; and is so far from *rendering Evil for Evil*, that his Study is to *overcome Evil with Good*. His Conversation is sweet and obliging, and his Carriage and Behaviour free, candid, and ingenuous. He considers that the lowest of Mankind are of the same Make with himself, distinguished only by a few accidental Circumstances; and therefore, how exalted soever his own Station be, his Demeanour is full of Compliance and Condescension. And, as he thinks that no one was ever born for himself alone, so he makes it his constant Aim and Endeavour to be as beneficial to all Mankind as possibly he can: Quite contrary to that sour and sullen, that bitter and malicious Disposition, which is continually employed in doing Mischief, and making Men, whom Nature ordained for mutual Helps and Comforts, continual Plagues and Torments to each other.

3. *Charity envieth not*: Though God vouchsafe others a larger Measure of Knowledge, or Riches, or Credit, or Honour, or indeed of any Blessing, whether *temporal* or *spiritual*, the *charitable* Man grudges it not, murmurs not at it, but is perfectly satisfied and contented in the Preference which these distinguishing Favours give them above himself; nay, he makes their Happiness become really and truly his *own*, and finds as much, if not more, Pleasure and Delight in their Success and Prosperity, than they themselves do; whilst all the Content and Joy, which their good Fortune administers to them, comes pure and unmixed to him, without bearing any Part in the Cares and Troubles wherewith it is usually attended.

4. *Charity vaunteth not itself*; and therefore he who is of this Temper has always a modest and humble Opinion of himself, pretending to no Accomplishments

complishments that he has not, and thrusting himself into no Business above his Capacity and proper Sphere. *In private*, he entertains himself frequently with the Sense and Consciousness of his own Ignorance, Infirmities, and Demerits; and, *in publick*, affects no Noise or glaring Figure, but desires rather to appear unobserved and undistinguished. Upon other Mens Abilities he always sets a due Value; receives their Sentiments with Deference; offers his own with Diffidence; and through his whole Behaviour shews, that *in Honour he prefers and esteems others better than himself*. And, as he pretends to no Talents that he has not, so is he not *puffed up* even with what he has: For he considers them as *Gifts* and *Graces*, which minister great Ground for *Humility* and *Thankfulness*, and all imaginable Care to answer the Purposes for which they were intrusted, but no Manner of Pretence for *Vanity* and *Self-conceit*; which, whenever they get Possession of a Man, carry him so far into the Contemplation of his own imaginary Perfections, as to make him slight and despise all the World besides, and think himself wronged, and affronted, and unjustly treated, if every one does not value him and his Judgment, in all Things, at the same Rate and Proportion that he does himself.

5. *Charity does not behave itself unseemly*; and therefore he that is possessed of this Virtue uses no opprobrious Words or Gestures, endeavours to dishonour or disparage no Man's Person; but is so courteous without Affectation, and so condescending without Interest or Design, that, as *St Chrysostom* and others interpret the Word, he thinks no Offices, though never so mean, below or misbecoming him; but reckons, that, whatever Inconveniency such Kind of Humiliations may occasion, it is amply compensated by the Benefits which others

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receive from them. And well may Charity be thus liberal of its Services, and regardless of the Manner of its Condescensions, when the next Character of it, as the Apostle tells us, is,

6. *That she seeketh not her own*; and therefore he that is her *Votary*, is so far from projecting Gain and Profit to himself, by the Favours and good Offices he does to others, that he is beneficent *to the Evil and Unthankful*, to the Indigent, and those that are unable to make him any Requit. The Largeness of his Heart, which is sensibly affected for human Nature, never *separates* itself by any abstracted Views; but, wishing Ease and Prosperity to all Mankind, contributes its utmost to serve and benefit them, and esteems the Glory of God, and the greater Gain of his Brethren, an ample Reward for his own Labour and Sufferings, nay, (upon so beneficial an Account) for his own Losses and Inconveniencies.

7. *Charity is not easily provoked*; for it keeps the Mind calm and smooth; corrects that Heat, which either the natural Constitution, or the Greatness of a Provocation, kindles in our Breast; and, even when our Resentment is most just, prevents its flaming out into Rage and Fury, beyond the Bounds of Reason and Religion. It secures us from all *Paroxysms* of Anger, as the *Greek Word* imports, and keeps that unruly Passion under such *Limits and Restrictions* as never to betray us into any *Indecency* of Behaviour, much less any rash and unwarrantable Actions.

8. *Charity thinketh no Evil*; is so far from suspecting the worst of Men, and their Actions, that it always puts the fairest Interpretations upon them. To the Good which they do it allows all just *Commendation*; and, as it never charges any but upon undeniable Evidence, so it ever appears to *excuse and extenuate* their Offences. It puts us in Mind, when

when we happen to be angry with an injurious Brother, of the many Kindnesses he once did us, and sets his former good Offices in Balance to his present Misbehaviour. It imputes a great deal to Mistake, to Misinformation, to Age, to Ignorance, to Infirmities, &c. and would have any Thing be thought the Cause rather than Ill-will, or premeditated Design to offend.

9. *Charity rejoiceth not in Iniquity, but in the Truth*; takes no Pleasure in false Reports and malicious Insinuations, which tend to defame and disparage our Neighbour, a Pleasure as common as it is barbarous; but, when such Suggestions have not Ground, and shed their *Venom*, is heartily glad of hearing the injured Sufferer's Innocence vindicated, and his good Name rescued from all the Scandal that Malice or Mistake had cast upon it.

10. *Charity beareth*, or, as it should be rendered, *covereth and concealeth all Things*; and is so far from exposing Mens Failings to the World, or thinking itself at Liberty to make them the Subject of publick Discourse, and the Jest and Diversion of all Companies, that it chuses rather to *bide*, and cast a Veil over them, be they never so many, or never so well known: For,

11. *Charity believeth all Things*; Without presuming to judge Mens Hearts, or to pry into their secret Intentions, it disposes us, *first*, to think favourably of every one, and *then* to credit all that can be said in Behalf of those that are ill spoken of, if there be any Grounds for such a Belief: And, if ever there be not, yet still,

12. *Charity hopeth all Things*: Whoever *sins*, she hopes it is out of Weakness, or Surprise, or Inadvertency, and not out of Wilfulness, or habitual Custom; whoever *errs*, she hopes it is out of Ignorance and unhappy Education, or unavoidable Prejudice, and not out of a wicked and depraved

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Mind; and, upon these Accounts, be the Man's Condition what it will, she never despairs, but wishes and prays, and by all proper Methods labours, to bring about his Conversion. And,

13. Lastly, though many Attempts of this Kind have been fruitless, yet still Charity continues *unwearied*, and can away with Injuries and Delays grievous to be borne, in Hopes that God will at last open the Eyes of the very worst, and give them *Repentance to the Acknowledgement of the Truth*: And this I conceive to be the Sense of *Charity's enduring all Things*.

These are the Characters wherein the Apostle has described this most excellent and extensive Virtue; which, in the Main, may be said to consist in an easiness to pardon, a Readiness to oblige, Mercy to the distressed, Bounty to the Indigent, Candour and Sweetness, Generosity and Disinterestedness in our Conversation towards all Men. We proceed now to consider,

I. Our manifold Obligations to the Practice of this Duty. That, by the original Order and Constitution of Nature, Men are so made and framed, that they necessarily want one another's Help and Assistance, for their mutual Support and Preservation in the World; that they cannot subsist, at least, cannot enjoy any Comforts of Life, independently of each other; but are manifestly fitted, by the very Frame of their Nature, to live in Societies, whereof *Charity* and mutual Friendship is the common *Bond*, is too plain to be controverted. In this Respect all Men naturally stand upon the same Level, have all the same Wants and Desires, and are all in the same Need of each other's Assistance: Every Man therefore, as he is a Man, is bound by the Law of his Nature, *i. e.* by common Humanity, to look upon himself as a Part or Member of that one *universal* Body or Community, which
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is made up of all Mankind; to think himself born and sent into the World on Purpose to promote the Good and Welfare of all his Fellow-Creatures; and, consequently, obliged, as the necessary and only effectual Means to that End, to embrace them all with universal Love, Charity, and Benevolence.

And, as it is founded in the Law of Nature, so is it consonant to the Inclinations of Mens Minds, to be kindly affectioned to, and beneficial one towards another; insomuch that, if Covetousness, and Revenge, and other foolish and absurd Passions were not suffered to over-rule this natural Disposition, they would universally enjoy the happy Fruits and Effects of it. For, even in this present corrupt State of the World, as far as Mens Vices will permit them, they still desire to keep up a general Commerce and Communication with each other; they love to increase their *Dependencies*, by multiplying Affinities; to enlarge their *Friendships*, by mutual good Offices; and to establish *Societies*, by a Communication of Arts, and Labour, and Industry: And, since the only possible Means of preserving such Societies in any tolerable and durable Manner, is the Practice of mutual Love and universal Benevolence, this plainly shews us what the Direction and Tendency of uncorrupted Nature is.

And, as to love and do good to one another is consonant to the *original* Inclinations of Mens Minds, so is it agreeable to that Nature of God which we are required to *imitate*, and those Laws of God which we are bound to *obey*. *God is Love*, as the Apostle styles him, an infinite and inexhaustible Fountain of never-failing Goodness; who, being eternally happy in the Enjoyment of his own unspeakable Perfections, could have no other Motive to create Things at first, but only that he might communicate his Goodness and Happiness to his

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Creatures; as he continues to preserve them for no other Reason but that he may still continue to do good to them: For *he maketh his Sun to rise on the Evil and on the Good, and sendeth Rain on the Just and on the Unjust, giving us from Heaven fruitful Seasons, and filling our Hearts with Food and Gladness.* Now, for the same Reason that God does himself continually delight in doing Good, and seems to take an especial Pleasure in describing himself by that particular *Attribute* of Love and Goodness; for the same Reason it must necessarily be his Will, that all rational Creatures should imitate him in that excellent Perfection. To this Purpose we may observe, that he hath given us noble Powers and Faculties; hath endued us with Reason and Understanding, to *discern between Good and Evil*; and implanted in our Minds such Affections and Dispositions as naturally incline us to mutual Benevolence and Assistance. He hath so framed and constituted our Nature, and so ordered the Circumstances of our present State, as to make Society and Friendship necessary to the Support and Comfort of Life, that Men might be continually exercised in the Practice of these Divine Virtues. He has interwoven the Interests of Men, and made the Happiness of every particular Person so dependent upon the Welfare of the *Publick*, that each one, from the Sense of his own Wants and Exigencies, might see the Reasonableness and Necessity of making it his principal Business to do good to others. In fine, he has given us no other Way of expressing, so acceptably, our Love and Gratitude to himself, whom *we have not seen*, as by loving and doing good to our Brethren, whom *we have seen*; for no Man hath seen God at any Time, but, if we love one another, hereby we know that God, though invisible, really dwelleth in us; that his Love is perfected in us, and that we dwell in him, and he in us, because

because we are Imitators of his Nature, and Partakers of his Spirit.

Nor are we only obliged to love and to do good to one another by the Ties of common Humanity, as we are *Men*, and Partakers of the same Nature; but, as *Christians*, we are to look upon ourselves as *Brethren*, in a more peculiar Manner, being all the Children of God in Christ, Members all of the same Body, Partakers all of the same Spirit, and Heirs all of the same blessed Hope of Immortality. For thus the Apostle argues, *there is one Body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one Hope of your Calling; one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.* Wherefore I beseech you, *that ye walk worthy of the Vocation wherewith ye are called, with all Lowliness and Meekness, with Long-suffering; forbearing one another in Love, and endeavouring to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace.*

Neither have we only the Example of God's Love and Goodness in general proposed to our Imitation, but, as Christians, we have it in a more particular and extraordinary Manner set before us, in that singular Instance of the Redemption of Mankind by the Death of his Son; of which great and undeserved Mercy we, being all Partakers, and having all our Hopes of Happiness founded upon it, are consequently under the strongest Obligation to be, in our Proportion, kind, and merciful, and charitable to our Brethren, as God has been infinitely good and merciful to us, for so we find the same Apostle arguing again: *Put on therefore, as the Elect of God, holy, and beloved, Bowels of Mercy, Kindness, Humbleness of Mind, Meekness, Long-suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another; if any Man has a Quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye: And, above all Things, put on Charity, which is the Bond of Perfection,*

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ness, and let the Peace of God rule in your Hearts, to the which also ye are called in one Body.

Once more : Nor is this Duty *obligatory*, as it proceeds from the Word of God only, but as it proceeds with a singular *Inforcement*, being the peculiar Law and Command of our Lord and Saviour, on which he insists particularly, and seems to recommend it above all others, as the most indispensable Qualification of a sincere Christian. *A new Commandment*, says he, *I give unto you, that ye love one another ; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another ;* and he makes it, as it were, the distinguishing Mark and Badge of his Profession ; for *by this shall all Men know that ye are my Disciples, if ye have Love towards one another.* He himself, whilst he was here upon Earth, went continually about doing good ; and, in so doing, hath set us an Example, wherein he requires *that we should follow his Steps* : And accordingly we find the Apostles every-where declaring, that universal Love and Charity is the *End of the Commandment*, the principal Aim and Design of our whole Christian Law ; and that, being destitute of this, all our other Pretences to Religion, all our Zeal for the Service and Honour of God, all our Gifts and Accomplishments, of what Kind soever they be, whether natural or supernatural, will avail us nothing : For, *though I speak with the Tongues of Men and Angels, says St Paul, and have not Charity, I am become as sounding Brass, or a tinkling Cymbal, i. e. all my Pretences to Religion are false and empty ; and though I have the Gift of Prophecy, and understand all Mysteries, and all Knowledge ; and though I have all Faith, so that I could remove Mountains, and have not Charity, I am nothing ; and though I bestow all my Goods to feed the Poor, and though I give my Body to be burned, and have not Charity, it availeth me nothing,*

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And well may the Scriptures lay so great a *Stress* upon the Practice of universal Love and Charity; since it is a Temper and Disposition of Mind, of all others, the most *perfective* of our rational Nature. It is That, which makes the Soul like unto God, and is at once the *Condition* and *Ground*, both of our present Happiness, and that which is to come: For we must be *like unto God*, if we will *see him as he is*, and must first attain that Frame of Mind, wherein the Happiness of Heaven essentially consists, if ever we hope to become Partakers of it. In a Word, *Charity* is the Disposition of Heaven, the ultimate End and Design of that Religion, which was revealed on Purpose to conduct us thither; and to which most of the other Virtues, Gifts, and Excellencies are but *subservient* Means, and such as must be *done away*, when that which is perfect is come: For, *whether there be Prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be Tongues, they shall cease; whether there be Knowledge, it shall vanish away. Faith, which is our firm Belief, and Hope, which is our present Expectation of Things future, shall both be made void by Fruition; but Charity and Goodness never fail; for they are the Dispositions of Mind, which are begun in the Virtues of this Life, and compleated in the Glories of the next.* We proceed,

II. To consider in what Measure, and from what Inducements, we are farther engaged to perform this Duty. *Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thyself*, this is the Rule; and it is the peculiar Excellency of this Rule, that by it we may easily discern all the *Specialities* of our Duty, without having Recourse to any external Instruction. For since every one, by his own Experience, knows what it is to love himself; since every one is conscious in what Manner he uses to treat himself, it is but consulting

sulting his own Breast, and that will teach him, in what Manner he is to treat his Neighbour.

Do we not, for Instance, so highly value and esteem ourselves, that no Defects observable in us, no Mischances befallen us, no Faults committed by us, can alter the good Opinion we have of ourselves? This may teach us, what Regard and Value we should ever preserve for our Neighbour. Do we not sincerely endeavour our own Welfare and Advantage of every Kind; wish good Success to all our Undertakings; and, if we rightly understand ourselves, desire the Health and Happiness of our immortal Souls? This may inform us, what we are to wish and desire for our Neighbour. Have we not a sensible Complacency in our own Prosperity, and are extremely glad to find ourselves thriving and flourishing in Wealth, in Reputation, or any other Accommodation or Ornament of Life? On the other Hand, do we not seriously grieve at our own Disasters and Disappointments, and heartily bemoan and pity ourselves, when fallen into Pain, or Poverty, or any other pressing Calamities? This may instruct us, what Pleasure we are to feel in our Neighbour's Prosperity, and how to condole and commiserate his Misfortunes. Are we easily angry with ourselves? Do we retain implacable Grudges, or execute malicious Designs against ourselves? Yea, rather are we not meek and patient towards ourselves, excusing our own Infirmities and Follies, and forgiving ourselves the most heinous Offences and Outrages against our own Interest, Honour, and Welfare? Hence we may learn the Lessons of Meekness and Patience towards our Neighbour, in bearing his Infirmities, and remitting any Wrongs or Discourtesies we have received from him. Are we rude in our Deportment, or harsh in our Language towards ourselves,

selves, apt to censure our own Actions, blazon our Defects, and aggravate our Failings, and not rather conceal our Blemishes, and extenuate our Crimes? Do we delight to report, or to hear ill Stories of ourselves, and not rather endeavour, all we can, to stifle them, to tie the Tongues, and stop the Ears of Men against them? Hence we may likewise learn, how civil and courteous in our Behaviour, how fair and ingenuous in our Dealing, how candid and mild in our Judgment or Censure, we should be towards our Neighbour. Thus reflecting on ourselves, and making our Practice towards ourselves the Pattern of our Dealing with others, we shall not fail of performing this Duty, and making our Charity commensurate to our Self-Love.

And, indeed, considering the near Relation we have to one another, and how, in the necessary and substantial Properties of our Nature, we are all the *same*, and distinguished only by what is contingent and circumstantial to us, we cannot but perceive the great *Reasonableness* of loving our Neighbour to this Degree, as he is the express Image of ourselves, but much more so, as he is created in the Divine Likeness and Similitude. The Prophet *Malachi* has a very wise Observation to this Purpose: *Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us? Why then do we deal treacherously every Man against his Brother?* 'Tis barbarous not to love our own Nature, but highly impious to hate or vilify him, in whom God hath formed *some*, though *weak* Resemblances of his own Perfections. How contemptible soever he may be in the Circumstances of his Fortune, yet he has in him an immortal Spirit, that shall live for ever, and live with God and Angels; he has in him those Powers and Faculties, that render him capable of serving and enjoying his Great Creator; and how dear
and

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and valuable he is to God, we may best perceive, by considering what God has done for him. He has not only *made him a little lower than the Angels, and crowned him with Glory and Honour*; but, as if this World were too mean, has prepared a more glorious one to receive him: He spares and indulges him, as a tender Parent his beloved Child; guards and provides for him by a kind and wakeful Providence; wooes and courts him by the Sollicitations of his Holy Spirit; and has provided a standing Propitiation for his Sins, by the Sacrifice of his only beloved Son. In a Word, he rejoices over him, to do him good, and longs, as it were, to have him with him in Heaven: And can we think, that the *Almighty* loves, where there is no Ground and Foundation for his Love? Herein therefore we have an Example set us, how we are to love him, whom God loves so well; and *this Commandment we have from him, that he who loveth God, love his Brother also*: The Fulfilling of which Law, which St *James* calls *the Royal Law*, is the great Perfection of our Natures, the Advancement and Enlargement of our Souls, the chief Ornament and Beauty of a great Mind; that which makes us *like God*, the best, most perfect, and happiest Being; and in that too, which is the prime Excellency, and Happiness, and Glory of the Divine Nature.

Of what happy Tendency this universal Love and Charity is, to free our Souls from those unruly and disquieting Passions of Anger and Envy, of Malice and Revenge, of Jealousy and Discontent, which are the great Torments of our Spirits; to make our Minds calm and chearful, and maintain us in the Possession and quiet Enjoyment of ourselves; to preserve us from many Mischiefs and Inconveniencies, which Enmity and Ill-will continually occasion; to gain Friends, and reclaim Enemies,

Enemies, and make every Condition either pleasant, or easy, or tolerable to us, is verified by every Day's Experience.

Of what particular Note and Observation, in the first and best Ages of Religion, the Practice of this Duty was among Christians; how it was the Mark and Badge of their Profession, and grew into a Proverb among the Heathens, *Behold, how these Christians love one another!* how some of the greatest Enemies of our Profession admired it, and esteemed the Example not unworthy their own Imitation, is what we are informed of from the Records of Antiquity: And therefore, to conclude this Head in the Words of the blessed Apostle; *If there be any Consolation in Christ, if any Comfort of Love, if any Fellowship of the Spirit, if any Bowels and Mercies; if any Endearments in our common Nature and common Christianity, if any Inducement in the Benefits and Advantages of any Duty, if any Encouragement in the Practice, and Examples of others, then fulfil ye my Joy, that ye be like-minded; and, having the same Love, be pitiful, be courteous; not rendering Evil for Evil, or Railing for Railing; but, contrariwise, Blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a Blessing.*

2. *Of Loving Enemies.*

THE *Jews*, having read, that their Ancestors were commissioned by God, as Ministers of his Justice, utterly to destroy the *seven Nations*, that possessed the Land of *Canaan* before them; to blot out the Remembrance of *Amalek* under Heaven, and to have no Peace with the *Ammonites* and *Moabites*, their declared Enemies; considered not, that these were special Cases, fixed by the Divine Command, and grounded upon Reasons both of
State

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State and Religion, but drew an Inference very falsely from them to their own private and personal Quarrels, and advanced it into a *Maxim*, that, though in general they were to love their Neighbours, yet they not only might, but ought to hate their Enemies, especially such, as were Enemies to their Law, and the Manner of their religious Worship. This their *Doctors* taught with much Assurance, and the People received it with a malicious Readiness, being naturally violent and revengeful: But our Saviour, in his Sermon on the Mount, endeavours to correct their Mistake, and to prescribe to his Followers the very contrary Habit of Mind: *Ye have heard, that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy Neighbour, and hate thy Enemy; but I say unto you, love your Enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you.*

Love your Enemies; here the inward Affection is required: Bless them that curse you, here outward Civility and Affability are enjoined, in Opposition to all rude and opprobrious Language: Do good to them that hate you; here real Acts of Kindness are commanded to be done, even to our bitterest and most malicious Enemies: Pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you. The highest Expressions of Enmity that can be imagined, are *Calumny* and *Cruelty*, and yet we are commanded to pray for those, that touch us in these two tenderest Points of all, our *Reputation* and our *Life*: And, to secure the Sincerity of our Charity towards our Enemies, we are required to express it by our hearty *Prayers* to God for them: To God, I say, before whom it is both impious and dangerous to *dissemble*, and from whom we can expect no Mercy for ourselves, if, with feigned Lips, we beg it of him for others.

This

Our Duty towards our Neighbour. III

This is the Description that our Saviour gives us of the Duty, and accordingly we shall consider farther; I. Wherein it consists: And, II. By what Arguments it may be enforced.

I. 1. Now the first Step towards *loving our Enemy*, is discharging our Minds of all Rancour and Virulence towards him; for, where the least Particle of this is, it will not be long, before it discover itself in our Words and Actions. Upon this Account, the Scripture very significantly calls it the *Leaven of Malice*, which, being of a spreading and fermenting Nature, will, in Time, diffuse a Sourness upon a Man's whole Behaviour. Nay, should we suppose, (which is very seldom found) that a Man has such an absolute Empire and Command over his Heart, as for ever to stifle his Disgusts, and to manage his Actions in a constant Contradiction to his Affections; yet all this is but a *Mystery* of Diffimulation, and *acting a Part*, instead of acting a Friend. Enmity, however, is a restless Thing, and not to be dissembled, without some Torment to the Mind that entertains it: And therefore we may presume, that he, who is resolved to hate his Enemy, and yet resolves not to shew it, has turned the Edge of his Hatred *inwards*, and becomes a *Tyrant*, and an Enemy to himself; nor can he wish his most mortal Adversary a greater Misery, than thus to carry a Mind, always big and swelling, and ever ready to burst, and yet never give it Vent. Are we then persuaded, that both our Duty and Interest require, that we should deport ourselves with all Signs of Love to our Enemies? Let us but take this easy Course, to entertain the Thing in our *Hearts*, which we would manifest in our *Converse*, and then we shall find small Difficulty in the next Instance of our Love to our Enemies; which is,

2. Blessing

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2. Blessing them *that curse us*. The Word which we render *bless*, implies both our *speaking them civilly to their Faces*, and *speaking well of them behind their Backs*: And therefore, though they reproach, revile, and slander us; treat us, when *present*, with the most contemptuous and insulting, the most scurrilous and bitter Language; and, when we are *absent*, make it their Business daily to lessen and defame us, and to say all the bad Things of us, that they can either hear, imagine, or invent; our Conduct is to be directly the Reverse of this. We must answer them in the most civil and courteous, the most obliging and good-natured Terms; and, whenever we have Occasion to speak of them in Company, labour to conceal their Faults, where Charity and Justice do not require us to discover them; put the best Construction upon all their Actions, and be ready to publish whatever we know virtuous and commendable in them, even though they will acknowledge no such Quality in us: For thus the Christians behaved of old; *We are Fools*, says St Paul, *for Christ's Sake, but ye are wise in Christ; ye are honourable, but we are despised; being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer; being defamed, we intreat*. What Harmony, what Beauty, what Sweetness, what Evenness, what Perfection must there be in such a Temper as this! What Command over his Passions must we suppose in such a Person! And how stately and magnificent does it look, to see him unmoved by Abuse, and invincible by Reproach, returning Good for Evil, and gracious Wishes for base and horrid Imprecations! This certainly is one of the best Arguments of a great and generous Mind; for, according to the Observation of the wise Man, *he that is slow to Anger, is better than the Mighty; and he that ruleth his Spirit, than he that taketh a City*.

3. To love an Enemy, is to do him all the real Offices of Kindness and Beneficence, that Opportunity shall lay in our Way. Has Providence, for Instance, put any of my Enemy's Concernments, his Health, his Estate, his Preferment, or any other Thing conducing to the Convenience of his Life, under my Power or Influence? Why, in all this, it gives me an Opportunity to manifest, whether or no I can reach the Sublimity of this Precept. Is my Enemy sick and languishing, and is it in my Power to cure him, as easily, or to kill him, as safely, as if I were his Physician? Christianity here commands me to be concerned for his Weakness, to rescue him from Death and the Grave, and to preserve that Life, which perhaps would have once destroyed mine. Do I see mine Enemy defrauded, and circumvented, and like to be undone in his Estate? I must not sit still, and suffer him to be ruined, but contribute my Assistance to discover the Fraud, or repel the Oppression, and be as ready to preserve him from Poverty, as I would to relieve him, if he were in it. Does it lie in my Way to put in a Word to dash, or promote my Enemy's Business or Interest; to give him a secret *Blow*, that shall strike him to the Ground for ever, and never know the Hand from whence it came? Can I, by my Power, obstruct his lawful Advantage and Preferment, and so reap the *diabolical* Satisfaction of a close Revenge? Can I do him all the Mischief imaginable, and that easily, safely, and successfully, and so applaud myself in my Power, my Wit, my subtle Contrivances? Yet all these vile Practices, and accursed Methods of growing great, and rising by the Fall of an Adversary, are to be detested, as infinitely opposite to that Innocence and Clearness of Spirit, that Openness and Freedom from Design, which becomes a Professor of Christianity. On the contrary,

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trary, amidst all these Opportunities of doing Mischief, I must espouse my Enemy's just Cause, as his *Advocate* or *Solicitor*; I must help it forward by favourable Speeches of his Person, a due Acknowledgment of his Merit, and a fair Construction of doubtful Passages; and all this, if need be, in secret, where my Enemy neither sees nor hears me do him these Services, and, consequently, where I have all the Advantages and Temptations to do otherwise.

4. The last and crowning Instance of our Love to our Enemies, is *to pray for them*; for by this a Man acknowledges himself, as it were, unable to do enough for his Enemy, and therefore he calls in the Assistance of Heaven, and engages *Omnipotence* to compleat the Kindness. Prayer for my own Prosperity is, indeed, a necessary Duty, but, if we consider it narrowly, 'tis but a kind of lawful and pious *Selfishness*: But now, when I pray as heartily for my Enemy, as I do for my *Daily Bread*, and reckon his Felicity among my own Necessities; when I recommend him to God's infinite Power and Compassion, to restore his Health, relieve his Wants, and supply him with all needful Blessings, even at the same Time that he is maligning and persecuting me; I then follow that Divine Pattern of perfect Charity, who, in the Midst of the most barbarous and contumelious Usage, made both this Prayer and Apology for his Murderers; *Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.*

This then is the Perfection of Christian Charity, to be kindly affected, not to our Friends and Benefactors only, but to our Enemies and Persecutors. 'Tis a *good* Degree of Charity to speak them fair, and give them good Words, at the same Time that they are reviling and reproaching us; 'tis an *higher* Degree of it, to confer real Benefits upon

upon them, and contribute what we can to their Happiness and Welfare; but 'tis the *Top* and Perfection of it, to recommend them to God, who can do them more Good than we can; can grant them that Grace of Repentance, which we can only wish them; can bestow upon them that Pardon for their Faults, which we can only request for them; and make them as great and as happy as he pleases, both in this World, and in the next.

“ But if all this is to be done for our Enemies,
“ where is the Difference between those that have
“ done us Kindness, and those that have done us
“ Wrong? The most we can do for our best
“ Friends, and kindest Benefactors, is to love
“ them, to bless them, to do good to them, and
“ to pray for them; if therefore we are obliged
“ to do all this for our Enemies, there is plainly
“ nothing more left to be done for our Friends.”

Now, though it cannot be denied, that *Friendship in general* is to be extended to all Mankind, even to those, that hate and injure us, as well as to those, that do us good; yet that *particular* and *special* Friendship, *i. e.* the loving of one Person more than another, which induces an additional Obligation, and is one of the greatest Comforts of Society, is still as lawful, and as commendable, as ever, we have an Instance in our blessed Saviour himself; who, though he was continually teaching and instructing, healing and doing good to an ungrateful People, and though he purposely came into the World to *die for his Enemies*, (which is the strongest Effort of Love, that can be made even to our dearest Friends) yet, nevertheless, he had his *twelve* Disciples, with whom he conversed, with more Intimacy; whom he instructed with more Diligence and Freedom; and prayed for, in a particular Manner, with more than ordinary Tenderness and Concern: And, even, in that

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Number, *three* of them were singled out for special Confidences and Favours; and of these three, *St John* is eminently distinguished, as his *Bosom-Friend*, and the *Disciple whom he loved*: Which makes it evident, beyond all Controversy, that, however the Christian Religion may require a very *extensive* Charity, yet has it still left Room for the Obligations of particular Friendships and Relations. I am bound, indeed, to relieve my Enemy, if I can, when he wants; but I am not bound to make him *extraordinary Presents*, to leave him *Legacies*, or make him the Inheritor of my Estate. I am required to love my Enemy, and to wish, and do him all the good I can; but it does not presently become necessary, that I should take him into my *Bosom*, and give him the same Place in my most secret Thoughts and Purposes, that is due to my most familiar Friend: And though I am to deny my Assistance to none, yet, when Friend and Foe stand in Competition, and both cannot be served at once, the Apostle, I think, has determined the Preference; for, *as we have an Opportunity*, says he, *let us do good unto all Men, but especially unto them that are of the Household of Faith*; and, by Parity of Reason, especially to those of this *Household*, that are bound to us by a nearer Tie of *Friendship* or *Consanguinity*.

But the greatest Objection of all against the Practice of this Duty arises from the vast Difficulty, that is supposed in it: "What, love an
" *Enemy*, and embrace a Wretch, that would take
" away my Life, had he a secure Opportunity!
" As well may you bid me pull up Mountains by
" the Roots, or stop the Sun in its Course: The
" Thing is *impossible*, and the whole Tendency of
" Nature is against it. To forgive Injuries, and
" tamely put up Affronts, are *Lessons* proper for
" the Weak and Pusillanimous, for such as want
" Power,

“ Power, or an Opportunity to express their Resentments ; but they badly comport with a Man of Spirit, and worse with a Man of Honour.” Now, to silence this Objection, we cannot do better than proceed,

II. To some of the Motives and Arguments, that may recommend the Love of our Enemies, and reconcile us to the Practice of it. Would we be impartial, and lay aside our Prejudice, we might perhaps discern several great and good Qualities in the Person that hates us : And, even in an Enemy, *whatsoever is lovely, whatsoever is of good Report*, should not go without its due Praise and Acknowledgment. Nay, suppose the worst, that he is never so much an Enemy, and never so bad a Man, yet still he is a *Man*, joined with us in the Society and Communion of the same Nature, and partaking of the Image and Super-inscription of our Heavenly Father ; and we paint our Enemy then in wrong Colours, when we think him capable of affording us no Benefit at all ; since by him we may be admonished of our Faults, which our Friends perhaps would be shy of mentioning, and too tender in reproving : By him, and the Fear of his Censures, restrained from those Liberties, which, if we had taken, might have proved a Snare and Temptation to us : And by him, and his Injuries, have an Opportunity given us of improving our Faith and Patience, and thereby of increasing our future Happiness. In him, indeed, there is no such Intention, and all that he does, is in pure Hostility against us ; but still we are to consider him as an *Instrument* in God’s Hand, without whose Appointment or Permission nothing can befall us, and, consequently, not fasten our Eyes with Indignation upon him, but have always an awful Regard to the divine Providence, that employs him ; and upon this Consideration it was,

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that *David* suppressed all impatient and resentive Thoughts, when he was sadly reviled, and treated with Indignity by *Shimei*. He had those about him, no Doubt, that were ready enough to be the Executioners of his Revenge ; but all that he had to say was ; *let him curse ; for the Lord hath bidden him : Who shall then say, wherefore hast thou done so ?*

This Enemy of ours, perhaps, at present, may create us some Uneasiness, yet who knows, but that, in Time, he may become (what reconciled Enemies usually are) one of our best Friends, and the Matter of our Joy and Consolation ? And, to bring about this Event, what can we imagine so prevalent, as a continual doing of kind and good Offices to those that bear us Ill-will ? For if, to see an injured Person, when insulted by outrageous Malice, not only patient in bearing it, but quietly passing by all other Methods of Revenge, beside that of a generous Contempt ; if such a surprising Sight as this, I say, cannot but fill, even him that does the Injury, with secret Shame and Confusion ; what Operation may it not be expected to have, when the same innocent and injured Person, not contented only to forbear and forgive, pursues his very Persecutor with Courtesy and Kindness, and endeavours to reduce him by all seasonable good Offices, and by all the Overtures of Reconciliation, and Invitations to Friendship, that he can think of ? Such *resolved* Goodness, without Dispute, must be enough to subdue the most obstinate Ill-nature, and can hardly fail of the Effect, whereof the Apostle gives us this Assurance ; *if thine Enemy hunger, feed him ; if he thirst, give him Drink ; for, in so doing, thou shalt reap Coals of Fire on his Head.* — Coals, that, when once they come to touch the Heart, will melt him down, be he made of never so stubborn Metal, into Easiness and Compliance, refine him
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from all his unsociable Passions, and fit him for your Familiarity and Friendship.

But if this Event should not follow, nay, if even we are assured before-hand, that the Malice our Enemy bears us, is so settled and implacable, that no Love or Kindness on our Part can work upon his Temper, and regain his Friendship ; yet, herein is the great Advantage of this Duty, that, in loving our Enemies, we really exercise and express our Love to ourselves : *By loving an Enemy*, notwithstanding his Hatred to me, I free my Mind of those boisterous Passions of Anger, Hatred, and Revenge, which put the Spirits into an unnatural Fermentation and Tumult. *By not being easily provoked*, I blunt the Edge of the Weapon, wherewith he seeks to hurt me ; and, *by returning Good for Evil*, I have it in my Power sufficiently, though innocently, to be revenged of him. I can make his very Eyes sore, to see so much Goodness in one that he hates ; I can gall and vex him to the Heart, by a generous Return to an unworthy Provocation ; and, in short, can shame and confound him quite, by shewing myself to be, in all the Contention between us, much the better, and the wiser, and the greater Man of the two.

And now, what a pleasing Prospect must it be to the meek, the humble, and the patient Soul, whenever an Enemy approaches, to perceive himself placed, as it were, in Eminence above him, and that he is still able to keep himself quiet and undisturbed, notwithstanding all the rude Attacks that can be made upon him ; nay, to perceive, that, without any outward Force or Violence, without striking a single Stroke, or saying one Word, he can most sweetly and innocently be revenged, only by continuing firm to his Duty ? Nor can it but enhance this Pleasure, to conceive some probable Hopes of vanquishing the sturdiest

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Opposition of an Enemy, by pure Dint of Courtesy and Kindness; and like a great and wise *General*, (as one fitly compares it) by Art and Stratagem, by Skill and Conduct, by Patience and wise Delay, to make an End of the War, without ever putting it to the Hazard of a Battle.

By our Lord's Authority, we may venture to carry the Practice of this Duty to a still higher Pitch of Commendation. For, as Love for Love is but Justice and Gratitude, and Love for no Love Favour and Kindness; so Love for Hatred and Enmity is a most *divine* Temper, and that whereby we *become the Children of our Father, which is in Heaven: For he maketh his Sun to rise on the Evil and on the Good, and sendeth Rain on the Just and on the Unjust.* Who then can think it beneath him to pass by an Injury, or to put up an Affront, when he sees that God, the sovereign Creator and Lord of all Things, whose Power no Creature is able to resist, does nevertheless spare and preserve us (vile Worms, and sinful Dust and Ashes) who provoke him every Day, and, by our continual Abuse of his Forbearance and Long-suffering, call for the severest Vengeance upon us? Who can think it unbecoming his Dignity or Greatness, even to buy his Peace with his Neighbour, who has done him Wrong, by doing him, as he has Opportunity, all Offices of Goodness and Kindness, when he has before him the Example of God himself, intreating us to be reconciled to him, and, notwithstanding our manifold Provocations, desirous to purchase our Friendship at any Rate: When we have the Example of the Son of God, our crucified Saviour, *who did no Sin, neither was Guile found in his Mouth; and yet, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not:* When we have the Example of his glorious Company of Apostles, who in all Things ap-
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proved themselves, as the Ministers of Christ, and his faithful Followers, in Honour and Dishonour, by evil Report and good Report, as Deceivers, and yet true: When we have the Example of his Church, in the best Ages, who, as Justin Martyr tells the Jews, prayed for them, and all others, that were unjustly their Enemies, that, repenting of their Wickedness, and ceasing to blaspheme Christ Jesus, they might, together with Christians, be saved by him, at his second glorious Coming: When we have his gracious Promise of a Recompence to be made us, for all that we suffer upon this Score; for blessed are ye, when Men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all Manner of Evil against you falsely for my Sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your Reward in Heaven: And lastly, when we have his severe Comminations, that, without forgiving our Enemies, we can have no Remission of our own Transgressions; for, if he that is but Flesh (as the Son of Syrach observes) nourisheth Hatred, who shall intreat for Pardon of his Sins? And therefore he concludeth, Remember thy End, and let Enmity cease: Remember Corruption and Death, and abide in the Commandments: Remember the Commandments, and bear no Malice to thy Neighbour: Remember the Covenant of the most High, and wink at Ignorance.

SECT. I.

Of Justice in general.

JUSTICE is that Virtue, which is concerned in the Observance of those *Laws*, whether *human* or *divine*, which respect the several *Rights* of *Men*, whether *natural* or *acquired*.

I. The

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I. The *natural* Rights of Men are those, which appertain to them, as *rational* Creatures, dwelling in mortal Bodies, joined together in mutual Relations, and united in one common Society. These are Rights inherent in them, antecedently to all human Constitutions, and what they may justly claim of one another, as *eternal Dues*, which no *Laws* can cancel, no *Custom* dissolve, no *Circumstances* make void or abrogate. To do justly then, with respect to this kind of *Rights*, is to render to every Man what we are indebted to him by the Obligation of Nature; as he is a *rational Creature*, to treat him *equitably*, and to do him all the good we can justly desire he should do to us, if we were in his *Circumstances*; quietly to permit him to judge for himself, without endeavouring to *tyrannise* over his Conscience, by persecuting, censuring, and reviling him, because he is not of our Opinion; freely to suffer him to comply with the Dictates of right Reason, and not to put him, by any kind of Violence or Necessity, upon any wicked or dishonourable Act; and, in a Word, to pay him all those fair Respects, and Instances of Courtesy, that are due to the Dignity of human Nature. These are Debts, which every rational Creature owes to his own Kind, and which we cannot withhold from one another, without manifest Injustice to human Nature: But then, as we are rational Creatures, *inhabiting these mortal Bodies*, we are obliged in Justice not to maim, or destroy, or captivate another Man's Body, unless it be in the necessary Defence of our own Lives, Estates, or Liberties; not to deprive him of his necessary Livelihood and Subsistence, but out of our Abundance (if he be rich, and we poor) to supply his Necessities. And so again, as we are rational Creatures, *joined together by natural Relations*, we are obliged to pay each other all those Respects and Duties, which

which the Nature of our Relation calls for ; as we are *Parents*, to love, and instruct, and make suitable Provision for our Children ; and, as we are *Children*, to love, and reverence, to succour, and obey our Parents ; and so in all other Relations. Once again, as we are rational Creatures, *united in one common Society*, we owe Love and Peace, Truth and Credit, Protection and Participation of Profit to our Fellow-members ; and when, instead of these, we hate and malign, we vex and disturb one another ; when we lye, and equivocate, and violate our Promises and Oaths ; when we are negligent and prodigal of each other's Lives, Estates, and Reputations, and usurp to ourselves all the Profit of our mutual Intercourse, we then destroy the *natural Rights* of human Society, and demean ourselves as open *Enemies* to Mankind.

2. The *acquired Rights* of Men are such, as arise from their *sacred* and *civil* Relations, from their *legal Possessions*, their *personal Accomplishments*, their *outward Rank and Quality*, and the like ; of which we intend to discourse somewhat more distinctly, after we have considered, 1. Our Obligation to *Justice in general* ; and, 2. The *Rule and Motives*, that may engage our Practice of it.

I. That there is a secret Inclination, or Impression upon the Minds of Men, whereby they are naturally carried to approve some Things, as good and fit, and to dislike other Things, as having a native Evil and Deformity in them ; and that, by these natural Inclinations and Impressions, the great Lines of our Duty may be traced out, a Man needs but consult the Oracle of his own Breast to be satisfied. That to be just in our Dealings, true in our Trusts, faithful in our Promises, and in all Things to do to others, as we would they should do unto us, are Actions eternally *good*, and fitted to the genuine Propensions of our Nature ; as, on
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the contrary, to be false and perfidious in our Words or Deeds, to injure the Innocent, or oppress the Impotent, or defraud the Ignorant, are Actions eternally *evil*, and abhorrent to our natural and undepraved Notions, is visible from the *Glory* and *Appearance*, which is known to attend the *one*, and the *Shame* and *Confusion* which usually accompanies the *other*; for *Glory* and *Shame* are nothing else, but an Appeal to the Judgment of others, concerning the Good or Evil of our Actions.

And, as by our natural Propensions we are called upon to the Practice of all Manner of Justice, so are we no less obliged to perform it, in Conformity to the *Nature*, in Submission to the *Providence*, and in Obedience to the *Will* of our great Creator. As God, by the infinite *Self-sufficiency* of his Nature, is secured from all Temptation to Injustice, so, by the infinite *Goodness* of it, he stands invariably bent and inclined to deal justly and righteously by his Creatures, never to withhold from them any Right, never to afflict them beyond their Demerit; and therefore the Royal Psalmist makes his Acknowledgment; *Righteous art thou, O Lord, and upright are thy Judgments*; even as the seven Angels, in the Song of the Lamb, declare, *Great and marvellous are thy Works, Lord God Almighty, just and true are thy Ways, thou King of Saints*. Since then the Nature of God is the great *Exemplar* and *Pattern* of all reasonable Natures, as being in itself the most *perfectly reasonable*, whatever is imitable in it, that we are obliged to transcribe into our own; and, consequently, since he is eternally just, we are obliged to be just likewise. For indeed, considering that God, as the supreme Lord and Proprietor of all Things, has an eternal Right to share his own Goods amongst his own Creatures, as he pleases, to *deprive* another Man of what his
Providence

Providence has allotted him, besides the Injury done the Person, is a direct Opposition to the Divine *Ordination* and Appointment; a setting ourselves up to carve for ourselves out of those Allowances, that he has distributed to others, and living in open Rebellion to his wise Government. Well therefore might the Word of God *teach* and admonish us, *that, denying Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World*; that, in all our Dealings, we should maintain a *Conscience void of Offence, not going beyond, or defrauding one another*; but, in every Thing, dealing with other Men, as we would they should deal with us: For *he hath shewed thee, O Man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God*? What doth the Lord require of thee? All thy other Works, and Performances, *thy coming before him with Burnt-Offerings, with Calves of a Year old; thy bringing to his Altar Thousands of Rams, and ten Thousand Rivers of Oil*; nay, *thy giving thy First-Born for thy Transgression, the Fruit of thy Body for the Sin of thy Soul*, will avail thee nothing: So long as thou art a Transgressor of the eternal Rules of Righteousness, whatever thy Worship, whatever thy Form of Religion be, it will never recommend thee to the Favour of that God, who loves Justice more than Sacrifice, and the Integrity of thy Dealings, more than all the Solemnity of thy other Services. And so we proceed,

II. To state the *Measure* and inforce the *Motives* of this Duty. It is reported of *Alexander Severus*, the Roman Emperor, that he had so great an Esteem for our blessed Saviour, upon Account of his being the Author of this one Sentence, *All Things whatsoever ye would that Men should do unto you, do you even so to them*, that he was once minded to have

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have built him a *Temple*, and received him into the Number of the Heathen Gods. And well might the Emperor have so good an Opinion of its Author, since this, of all others, is a Rule so plain and clear, so near at Hand, and accommodated to all the common Cases of human Life, that nothing more excellent can be devised for the Regulation of our Intercourse with one another; only there may be some Doubt concerning the *Extent* of the *Matter* contained in it, which we will first endeavour to explain, and then shew the manifold Usefulness of it.

Now, though this Rule be of excellent Use towards the Direction of our Behaviour in general, yet there are several Cases wherein it will not hold; wherein we are obliged not to grant that to others which we ourselves perhaps, were we in their Circumstances, and they in ours, might be willing enough, *unreasonably willing*, to obtain from them. A *Benefactor*, for Instance, is not bound to comply with the Demands of such as ask *unmerited* Favours, though conscious that he himself might be apt to make as extravagant *Requests*, were it his Turn to be the Object of another Man's Beneficence: Nor is a *Magistrate* at Liberty, much less under an Obligation, to turn the *Edge* of Justice from an importunate Offender, because, if he himself were the *Criminal*, he should certainly and equally desire to escape unpunished. The Rule therefore, which makes what we desire of other Men the Measure of our Dealings toward them, is to be understood, not of *vicious* or *excessive* Desires, but of such only as are fit and reasonable; such Requests as we can, in our calmest Thoughts, justify to ourselves; such as we are sure may be made with *Decency*, and cannot be refused without *Inhumanity*.

This is the necessary Limitation of the Rule: And, were it but duly observed, the *Seller* would

not take Advantage of the Ignorance of the *Buyer*, nor the Buyer make an Advantage of the Necessity of the Seller ; because his own Conscience would tell him, that, if he were the Buyer, and another should take such Advantage of his Ignorance, if he were the Seller, and another should make such Advantage of his Necessity, he should have Reason enough to complain of his being cheated or oppressed. If this Rule were duly observed, the *Borrower* would reckon himself strictly bound to restore what was lent him, in due Time ; and the *Lender* would be far from exacting any extravagant Conditions for the Loan of his Money or Goods, because he knows, that, when he *lends*, he expects the Borrower to be *punctual*, and, when himself is forced to *borrow*, he should be very loth to fall into the Hands of an *Extortioner*. Were this Rule well remembered and observed, there would be no Need of ever binding Men in Obligations, or suing them at Law, to perform their Bargains or execute their Trusts ; because whoever strikes a Bargain, or accepts a Trust, cannot but know *what* he would *account* another, that should falsify in either of these Particulars ; and therefore, should he himself do so, he must be convicted and condemned by his own Conscience. In fine, (for to run through all Particulars would be endless) who is there that does not call that Man a *Knave*, or an unjust Person, who robs him, who cheats him, who keeps from him his own, or who any Ways abuses him in Word or Deed ? Every Man has a quick Sense, and is ready to make loud Complaints of the Injuries and Affronts that are put upon him ; and therefore, if he would but make another Man's Case his own, he would have the same Resentment of the Injuries that are done to another, and, consequently, be restrained from doing any himself.

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This Commandment (says Moses, to engage the People to the Observance of the Moral Law) is not bidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in Heaven, that thou shouldst say, Who shall go up for us to Heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may bear it and do it? Neither is it beyond the Sea, that thou shouldst say, Who shall go over the Sea for us, that we may bear it, and do it? But the Word is very nigh unto thee, in thy Mouth and in thy Heart, that thou mayst do it: And, if this might be said of the Law in general, much more is it true of those eternal Rules of Righteousness, which lie open to common Use, are obvious to all Sizes of Apprehension, and ready at all Times for present Application. The greater therefore, and more inexcusable must the Violation of these Precepts be, since, however other Sins may be excused by our Ignorance, and in some Measure alleviated upon Account of the natural Defects of our Understanding, this can admit of no Cloak or Extenuation; because, whenever a Man deals unjustly by another, his Conscience (if he puts but the Question to his Conscience) will be sure to tell him, that he would not be so dealt with, were the Case and Circumstances his own; and therefore, if he resolves to deal unjustly, notwithstanding such Conviction, he can claim no Indulgence, deserves no Pity, and can pretend to no Mitigation of his Stripes, since he knew his Master's Will, and did it not.

It may be considered farther, that, however the unjust Man may make Profit and Advantage his ultimate End, yet, one Way or other, he is generally disappointed; because, how secretly soever he may carry on his *Mystery*, yet it will not be long before some unforeseen Accident will draw back the Curtain, and bring to Light the Fraud and Villainy which he practises behind it; and, when these are once detected, farewell Credit and Reputation

tation for ever. The Man that has suffered by his Dishonesty, either out of Charity to others, or out of Resentment of the Injury, will divulge his Knavery, and caution others against him; and what Expectance can he then have of thriving in his Trade or Calling, when his House becomes haunted, as it were, and his Frauds and Cozenages appear like Spectres at his Door, to frighten all Men from his Conversation? But suppose the best, and (what sometimes comes to pass) that the Man thrives, and grows great in the World by his Frauds and Injustice; yet, alas! what Comfort can he take in his ill-gotten Wealth, when every Part of it throws Guilt in his Face, and awakens some dire Reflection in his Conscience? By a continued Tumult of Excess and Riot he may make a shift perhaps to drown these Remonstrances; but, in all Probability, when Death, in some Disease or other, begins to approach him, and to place him within the Sight of a dreadful Eternity, his Conscience will then begin to *rouse* and *awake*, and raise an hideous Outcry against him. And what a wretched and deplorable Condition must he then be in, when his last *Will* and *Testament* sets before him a woeful *Catalogue* of uncanceled Guilts, and every ill-gotten Penny puts him in Mind of his approaching Damnation? Under these Circumstances, he has but these two Things to chuse, either to refund his unjust Acquisitions, or to venture to perish eternally for them. If his Resolution is to live and die with the Spoils of his Injustice about him, he thereby exposes himself to the *Wrath of God, which is revealed from Heaven against all Unrighteousness of Men*, and surrenders his immortal Soul, which the Gain of the whole World can never compensate, to the Pangs and Agonies of everlasting Death. But, if he is not so desperate as to intend this, he must then make Restitution of what he hath wrongfully ta-

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ken from his Neighbour, and in doing so, perhaps, strip himself of all. And now, what Folly and Madness is this, for a Man to take a great deal of Pains only to create himself more Trouble and Vexation? To spin a Thread, which he knows himself must unravel? And to load and cumber himself, as it were, with bringing home to his own House his Neighbour's Goods, which he must afterwards carry back again upon his own Shoulders, and, when that is done, leave his own House more naked and unfurnished than it was at first? He certainly is the wiser, as well as the honestest Man; wiser, I say, for this World, as well as the next, who, though he has but little, can call that little his own, as being the Fruit of God's Blessing upon his honest Industry, and may therefore (as the primitive Manner was) *eat his Meat with Gladness and Singleness of Heart, praising God, and having Favour with all the People.*

SECT. II.

Of Relative Justice.

BESIDES the general Justice, which is common to all Men, there is a special Kind of Justice, arising from the Respects and Relations wherein we stand, as *Superiors* and *Inferiors*, to each other. Now Superiors, with their respective Inferiors, are such, either with Regard to their *Authority*, or their *Excellency*. 1. Superiors in *Authority* are those, who, by God's Ordinance, have Power over us, and a Right to rule and govern us; and these are either in the *State*, in the *Church*, or in *private Families*. In the *State*, the Superiors are the Princes, or chief Magistrates, who are the *secular* Fathers of the Country, and God's

Vicegerents

Vicegerents in it. *In the Church*, they are the Ministers of the Gospel, who are the *spiritual* Fathers of the People committed to their Charge. *In a Family*, they and their respective Inferiors are Husband and Wife, Parents and Children, Masters and Servants. 2. Superiors in *Excellency* are such as surpass others, either in the Gifts of the Mind, or in Wealth and Honour, or in Beneficence and Liberality, &c. and our Purpose must be to shew, what are the several *Rights* that these Men may claim, and, consequently, what are the *Duties* that interfere between the Prince and Subject, the Pastor and People, Parents and Children, the Husband and Wife, the Master and Servant, Friend and Friend; between Superiors in *Rank* and *Riches*, in *Parts* and *Abilities*, and their respective Inferiors.

1. *Between Prince and Subject.*

WHOEVER will give himself Pains to reflect upon the State and Condition of Things in this World (and to consider how much stronger Influence Mens *Passions* have over them than their *Reason*) may soon be convinced of the Necessity of Government to the Peace and Happiness of it. We may perceive, by the Injustice and Wickedness that is done every Day, in Defiance of Law and Punishment, what Mankind would be if these Restraints were withdrawn, and Will and Pleasure were the sole Principle of every one's Actions. It is of happy Design therefore that God has appointed governing Powers in the World, for the Support and Comfort of human Society, to be his *Ministers to us for Good*, and *Revengers to execute Wrath upon him that doth Evil*. But then these Governors are not to look upon themselves as Persons exalted, by the immediate Direction of Heaven,

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to an Height above other Mortals, merely to be *Arbitrators*, at their own Pleasure, of the Lives and Fortunes of their Fellow-Creatures; but as Persons called, by the Providence of God, to a difficult and laborious Task; not to live in *Ease* and *Delicacy*, but to *watch*, Day and Night, for the Good of that Society in which they preside; to be distinguished indeed from others by the *Ensigns* of Greatness and Authority, but this only to make them more capable of serving the Publick, and consulting the Interest of all their Subjects, in their endeavouring, by all proper Means, to promote the Honour and Interest of true Religion, but without *usurping* an Authority over other Mens *Consciences*; in their taking Care to have the Laws duly executed, and yet that Execution tempered with all the *Lenity* and Goodness that may be consistent with the publick *Safety*; in *protecting* their Subjects against all outward Violence, and *providing* them such Things as are necessary for the Relief of their Wants; and in encouraging and promoting Persons of Merit and Probity, and making them the more peculiar Objects of their Favour and Confidence.

In the Language of Scripture, *Kings* and *Queens* are called the *nursing Fathers* and *nursing Mothers* of their People; and the Terms (in what Sense soever we take them, whether for *natural* Parents, or for such as supply their Place in the Care and Tuition of Children, *viz.* Guardians and Nurses) do certainly imply a wonderful Trust reposed in Princes, and a wonderful Care, Sollicitude, and Tenderness required of them, with Relation to those that are committed to them. As therefore *they are nursing Fathers*, they are to secure and promote the *temporal* Peace and Happiness of their Subjects, and, accordingly, should think themselves obliged to look into the Affairs of the Kingdom with their own

own Eyes, and to see that all Magistrates under them do their Duty, in their respective Stations and Offices; to take Care that their *Favourites* incroach not upon them, or make use of the Credit they have with them, for the Oppression of the meanest of the People; and to provide, that *impartial Justice* be administered to all; but Justice (as we said before) that is *tempered* with Mercy, because they should remember, that *their Thrones should be uphelden by Mercy*. And as *they are nursing Fathers*, with a more immediate Regard to the Church of God, their Business must be to maintain and defend the true Religion; to encourage Piety and Virtue; to oppose and discountenance all *Atheism* and *Infidelity*, all *Schisms* and *Heresies*, and all Vice, and Wickedness, and Impiety of what Kind soever; to use their utmost Endeavours to make all their Subjects good Men and good Christians; and, in order to this, not only to be exemplary themselves in Piety and Devotion, in Temperance and Moderation, and all other Virtues; but to take especial Care that Godliness be not defamed, and the *Ways of Truth* evil spoken of, by Reason either of the ill Lives or ill Principles of those that compass the Throne: For this was holy *David's* Resolution, and the Measure he designed to follow in his Government, when God had advanced him to the Kingdom of Israel: *I will walk in my House in a perfect Heart: I will take no wicked Thing in Hand: I hate the Works of the Unfaithful; no such shall cleave unto me. A froward Heart shall depart from me: I will not know a wicked Person; but mine Eyes shall look upon such as are faithful in the Land; and whose leader is a godly Life, he shall be my Servant: For take away the Wicked from before the King, (says his wise Son Solomon) and his Throne shall be established in Righteousness.*

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To be short, as *sovereign Power* was ordained by God for a publick Good, to guard and defend the Innocent, to shelter and relieve the Oppressed, to fence and propagate true Religion, and adjust and balance private Rights and Interests, every *Subject* has a Claim to be protected by it, in his Person and legal Rights, in his just Liberties and Privileges, and in the Profession and Exercise of God's true Religion; and the Prince, who, being invested with sovereign Power for this Purpose, either betrays, oppresses, or any Way inflaves his Subjects himself, or, out of Negligence or Malice, permits others to do it, is an injurious Invader of their Rights and Properties, and, though not accountable to any *human Authority*, shall one Day answer for it at the *Tribunal of God*.

And, on the other Hand, as Kings are God's *Vicegerents* here on Earth, and reign by his Authority, they have a Right to be obeyed in all Things, wherein they do not interfere with the Commands of God. As they are the *Representatives* of his Power and Majesty, they have a Right to be honoured and revered by their Subjects: And, as they were *substituted* by him to maintain the publick Weal, and to guard the Properties of their People, they have certainly a Right to be aided and assisted by them; *for they are God's Ministers*, says St Paul, *attending continually upon this very Thing: Render therefore to all their Dues; Tribute, to whom Tribute is due; Custom, to whom Custom; Fear, to whom Fear; Honour, to whom Honour.*

Sovereign Princes and States are the chief Instruments which the Providence of God employs in his Administrations here below: To them is intrusted the Execution of all Laws; and Laws, we know, are the Source of every Advantage that redounds to Mankind from Society. Even *ill Princes* cannot help doing a great deal of Good,
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by preserving some Degree of Order and Government in the World; but, when Virtue ascends the Throne, it dispenses Blessings without Number and without Measure. Seeing therefore, that, by the Administration of our *Princes, we enjoy great Quietness, and many worthy Deeds are done to this Nation* by their Care and Providence; it is certainly our Duty to *accept it always, and in all Places, with all Thankfulness*; and, instead of censuring and reviling, to *esteem them highly in Love, for their Works Sake.*

Christian Charity and Beneficence is certainly a Debt which we owe to *Kings* as well as the meanest of their Subjects; but how shall we extend our good Offices to those who move in so high a Sphere? How, but by entertaining a sincere Esteem for their Persons, and a good Opinion of their Administrations; by concealing their Faults, and commending their Virtues; by silencing the Clamours and suppressing the Jealousies which proud, and envious, and self-designing Men are too apt to propagate: These, together with our hearty Prayer to God for their Prosperity and Preservation, are the only *Compensation, or Return*, which most of us are capable of making them, for their Vigilance and Concern for the publick Safety; the Pains which they take, and the Hazard which they run, to secure it.

Most Men, indeed, by their Condition of Life, are set at too great a Distance from the *Springs* of Government, to be rightly instructed in Facts and Circumstances, and much less to enter into the Reason and Foundation of publick Councils; and therefore for such to censure the Conduct of their Superiors is talking without Knowledge, and judging without Examination. And even those who are placed in higher Stations, and have a nearer View of the publick Management, cannot but

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know what a large and weighty Task the Concerns of the *Publick* are; how many Difficulties arise, which the wisest Councils cannot foresee, nor the greatest Diligence surmount: And hereupon they should be so far from being the first in censuring and accusing the publick Conduct, that they ought, in Reason and Equity, to be the *Correctors* of others, whose Ignorance in these Matters shall, at any Time, betray them into too great Freedom and Severity.

When *St Paul*, standing before the Council of the *Jews*, made a solemn Profession of his Innocence, and that he *had walked in all good Conscience before God, even until that Day*, the Declaration was thought an insolent Boast, and offended the High-Priest to that Degree, that he commanded him to be *smitten on the Mouth*. Provoked at this opprobrious Usage, the Apostle indeed charges him with *Hypocrisy*, in sitting there to judge him after the Law, and yet commanding him to be *smitten contrary to the Law*: And, though the Grossness of the Affront he received might justify the Severity of this Charge, yet, when he is put in Mind, that it was the *supreme Magistrate* of whom he had said this, so far was he from vindicating, that he presently revoked it, and condemned himself for it. *I wist not, Brethren, that he was the High-Priest; for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the Ruler of thy People.* Instead of despising Dominion then, and speaking evil of Dignities; instead of reviling the Gods, and cursing the Rulers of the People; what is the Advice that this same Apostle gives us, equally conducive to our own Happiness and Interest, as well as theirs? *I exhort, says he, that, first of all, Supplications, Prayers, Intercessions, and giving of Thanks be made for all Men, and especially for Kings, and all that are in Authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable Life, in all Godliness and*
Honesty.

Honesty; for this is good and acceptable in the Sight of God our Saviour.

2. *Between Pastor and People.*

THE Ministers of God were, at all Times, a distinct Order of Men, invested with a peculiar Character, and appointed to the Office of preaching the Word, administering the Sacraments, and ordaining others to succeed in their Function: They are the *spiritual Fathers* of the Flock of Christ. That there is such a Relation between them and their respective Congregations, St Paul has more than intimated, when he tells the *Corinthians*, that, *though they might have ten Thousand Instructors in Christ, yet had they not many Fathers; none, indeed, besides himself; for in Christ Jesus, says he, I have begotten you through the Gospel.*

St Paul, being about to take his Leave of the Church of *Ephesus*, sends for the *Elders* that presided therein, and gives them this Injunction; *Take Heed unto yourselves, and all the Flock, over which the Holy Ghost has made you Overseers, to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own Blood; for I know this, that, after my Departing, shall grievous Wolves enter in among you, not sparing the Flock; and also of yourselves shall Men arise, speaking perverse Things, to draw away Disciples after them; and therefore watch.* In his canonical Epistles to *Timothy*, he abounds with such Exhortations as these; *Take Heed unto thyself, and unto thy Doctrine: Continue in them; for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee: Study, therefore, to shew thyself approved unto God; a Workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth. Preach the Word; be instant in Season and out of Season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all Long-suffering and Doctrine;*
and

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and be thou an Example of the Believers, in Word, in Conversation, in Charity, in Spirit, in Faith, in Purity; and, to compleat the Duty of God's Clergy, St Peter's Exhortation runs thus; *Feed the Flock of God, which is among you, taking the Oversight thereof, not by Constraint, but willingly; not for filthy Lucre, but of a ready Mind; neither as being Lords over God's Heritage, but being Examples to the Flock; and, when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a Crown of Glory, that fadeth not away: For they that be wise shall shine as the Brightness of the Firmament; and they that turn many to Righteousness, as the Stars for ever and ever.*

These are some of the Lines, wherein the Spirit of God has drawn the *pastoral* Care and Duty, by which he reminds every one, that has undertaken the *sacred* Function, that he ought to preach such *sound Doctrine*, as may not be reprov'd, and in a Manner adapted to the Capacities of his Hearers; that he should guard them against such *Errors* in Opinion and Practice, as are contrary to the Principles and Rules of the Gospel; that he should be very diligent and industrious in his Calling; in instructing the Ignorant, in reprov'g the Wicked, in exhorting the Negligent, in strengthening the Weak, in visiting the Sick, in comforting the Afflicted, in confirming those that stand, and reducing those that err; that he should execute this Office freely and willingly, not so much for the *secular* Advantage and Emoluments of it, as for the *spiritual* Good and Salvation of those Souls, that are committed to his Trust; and, above all, that he should be *blameless* himself, and, in his own Person, shew the People an Example of religious Behaviour, recommending them daily to God's Care and Protection, and *always, without ceasing, making Mention of them in his Prayers.*

Not

Nor is the Scripture less exprefs in declaring the Rights of the Church, and what the Duties of the People are with regard to their Ministers. *We beseech you, Brethren, says St Paul, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in Love, for their Works sake; for they are Ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech us by them, and they pray you, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God. Obey them therefore that have the Rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your Souls, as they that must give an Account, that they may do it with Joy, and not with Grief; and let him, that is taught in the Word, communicate to him that teacheth, in all good Things; for as they, which wait at the Altar, are Partakers with the Altar; even so hath the Lord ordained, that they, which preach the Gospel, should live by the Gospel.*

Thus Honour and Respect, Submission and Obedience, an high Esteem, and a liberal Maintenance, are what the People owe to their Ministers, besides their daily Prayers to God for his Blessing, and Success upon their Labours.

St Paul, writing to the *Ephesians*, exhorts them to pray always with all Prayer and Supplication in the Spirit, and to watch thereunto with all Perseverance and Supplication, as for all Saints in general, so more particularly for himself; that Utterance might be given unto him, and that he might open his Mouth boldly, to make known the Mystery of the Gospel: And what he requests for himself in this Place, he elsewhere enjoins to be done for every one, that is employed in this sacred Office: Finally, Brethren, pray for us, that the Word of the Lord may have free Course, and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked Men; for all Men have not Faith.

And

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And indeed, if spiritual *Knowledge*, whereby we discern our Duty, is conveyed by the *Word*, which God's Ministers preach, and if spiritual *Strength* to perform our Duty is communicated by those *Sacraments*, which they administer; if they are appointed by God, as *Guides*, to direct his People in the right Way to Heaven; as *Pastors*, to feed his Flock; as *Watchmen*, to prevent any Danger, that might surprise his Church; and as *Stewards*, to take Care of those of his *Household*: If so many and so valuable Blessings, I say, are imparted to the People of God by these Instruments, then will they deserve the Love of those, to whom their Ministry is so serviceable; and that Love will express itself, as in other Acts, so particularly in praying to God for those, by whom he bestows his Mercies and Loving-Kindnesses unto them.

And, if the Consideration of the Advantages, which God's People reap from the Ministry of their *Pastors*, engages them to pray for them out of *Love* and *Gratitude*; the Weightiness of their Charge, the great Difficulty of executing it as they ought, and the great Peril, that attends their not executing it, are no less powerful Motives, to engage all good Christians to pray for them out of *Pity* and *Compassion*. The more eminent their Dignity is, and the more beneficial their Work is, if rightly performed, the greater Danger do those, that assume this Dignity, and undertake this Work, expose themselves to, if they are guilty of any Thing, which may bring a Blemish upon their sacred Function, or if they do this *Work of the Lord deceitfully*. There is sufficient Reason therefore, that they, who are called to this Function, should not only themselves constantly fly unto God, for the Pardon of their Defects, and for a plentiful Supply of his Grace; but should beseech all good Christians likewise to *strive together with them*

them in Prayer, that they, who are not sufficient of themselves, may, by that Sufficiency, which is of God, be made able Ministers of the New Testament, and, in a due Discharge of their Office, save both themselves, and those, that hear them.

3. *Between Husband and Wife.*

THE Rights and Duties which arise from a married State, may be considered, either, 1. As they belong to the Man and Woman *promiscuously*; or, 2. As they more peculiarly belong to each of them, considered *distinctly*.

1. Since Marriage then is a Conjunction of Man and Woman, after the most strict and indissoluble Manner, and for their mutual Happiness, *as long as they both shall live*; 'tis most agreeable to the Nature, and absolutely requisite to this End of it, that they should entirely *love* one another; because it is impossible, that, where this Passion is not strong and *reciprocal*, either the *Unity* should be preserved, or the *Happiness* attained, which is proposed by both Parties, when they contract to enter into it. And this Reflection may serve to discover to us the imprudent Conduct of those, who, upon Motives of Interest, or any temporal Views whatever, marry without consulting their *Inclination*, or perhaps, in some Respects, contrary to it, and so involve themselves in Inconveniencies, greater than the Advantages, which they could propose, are capable of balancing. By this Means it comes to pass, that many Times People of great Degree and Rank are made miserable, and more miserable than their Inferiors. Respect is generally had either to Birth and Quality, or to Fortune and Alliance, without any Regard to Virtue, and good Qualities, and other Endowments, proper to engage and detain the Affections: And hence

hence they become *splendidly* and exemplarily unhappy, as if it were the *Sport* of Fortune to level Mankind, and, by some odd Disaster, or their own Folly, to reduce the *greatest* People to an *Equality* of Misery and Trouble with their *Inferiars*.

Those therefore, that propose Happiness to themselves in the *Conjugal* State, must be sure to lay the Foundation thereof in *Love*; and, as their Love is to continue *unto their Lives End*, must needs be obliged to take such Courses, as are proper to *confirm* and strengthen it; and to avoid all Manner of Occasions, that may any ways impair, or weaken it. Some of the ancient Christians would allow the Wives to employ more Art and Cost, in decking and adorning themselves, than they did single Women; because they judged it absolutely necessary to the Peace and Happiness of their Lives, to preserve and secure to themselves the Affections of their Husbands: And, in like Manner, Husbands should take more Care than ordinary to continue their Affections to them; and, to this End, should not suffer Error or Mistakes, Miscarriages or light Offences, Infirmities and Indiscretions, to alienate their Hearts, or give them a mean Opinion of their Understanding or Management. They, who cannot bear with many Failings and Defects, and cannot make a great many Allowances, are but badly fitted for Society and Friendship *in general*, and much less for a Society so *constant* and *continued*, as the married State requires; and therefore, if those, that are engaged therein, will not consider with themselves the Imperfections of human Nature; if they will not remember their own Mistakes and Miscarriages; if they will be unreasonable, take Advantages, and make ill-natured Observations and Reflections on the Follies and Weaknesses of their *Partners*; if they will treasure them up in Memory, and make them

them Occasions of Distrust, and Topics of Upbraiding, and unseemly Revilings; they will quickly see an End of Peace and Quietness, and soon find that their Love will cool and grow languid.

2. Another Duty, common to Husband and Wife, is *Fidelity*, or a just Observation of their Engagements, and solemn Vows; and this is a Duty so essentially necessary to the *Marriage-State*, that any notorious Breach and Violation of it, not only invalidates the most religious Contracts, and sets the *innocent* Party at full Liberty, but even dissolves the *Marriage-Band* itself immediately before God. It is indeed the Ground and Foundation of all Marriage-Promises, and the Supposition, upon which all such Engagements are built; and therefore, when this Supposition fails, when this Ground and Foundation of the Contract and Engagement is removed and overturned, the Contract is itself no longer binding to the innocent and unoffending Party. They may proceed in their Engagements indeed, if they please; but the Transgression of the other Side sets them at Liberty, notwithstanding the most serious and most solemn Promises.

And as Perfidy in this Kind is the Dissolution of the Band of Matrimony, so is it a Crime of so deep a Guilt, as can never be attoned in this World, and of such horrible Injustice, as can admit of no Reparation or Amendment. And therefore how careful should all married Persons be, not only to adhere *strictly* to the Letter of their Marriage-Vow, so as never to falsify it by any direct Violation; but to forbear, as much as possible, all *Advances*, and avoid all *Occasions*, that may betray them into so heinous a Crime! And to this Purpose, the best and safest Way will be, to keep their Heart with all Diligence, so as to admit no foreign Inclination, or Desire; but if they cannot
always

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always shut their Eyes against those *Objects*, which are apt to affect them ; if, through Inadvertency, or Surprise, it cannot be helped, but that some irregular *Emotions* must unavoidably arise in their Minds, their next and immediate Care should be, to repel, and, as soon as they can, totally to suppress them ; lest by Degrees they gather Strength, and get the Dominion over them ; which has possibly been the Case of many Persons, who, in the first *Essays* of their Inclination, apprehended nothing dangerous, nor designed any Thing criminal.

3. Another Duty, common to both, is their taking all such prudent Methods in their Behaviour, as may remove all Occasions of *Jealousy* and Distrust. For as all *private Advances* towards other Persons, by Way of *criminal* Address, are highly culpable, and to be avoided with the greatest Caution ; so, when they are made in an open or more undisguised Manner, when they break out into Indecencies too notorious to be concealed, even from the offended Party, this is provoking to the last Degree, and apt to excite a *Passion*, of all others the most difficult to be restrained, and called by *Solomon the Rage of a Man*, though the other Sex are sometimes transported with it beyond the Nature, the Mildness, and Modesty of their Temper. And therefore all Freedoms and Familiarities with others, that may give an untoward *Umbrage*, must be declined ; and all Discourses, that may allure into Sin, rejected with Abhorrence. The Eye, the Tongue, and the Ears must be all kept chaste ; the Garb and Apparel be modest and unaffected ; and the whole Carriage honest and inoffensive, and void of *Suspicion*, as well as *Blame*. Nor are the Occasions of Jealousy and Distrust to be mutually avoided only in the tender Point of *matrimonial* Chastity, but even in all others,

others, wherein either their *common*, or their *separate* Interests (so far as they can be supposed to have any separate) are concerned. They ought, particularly, to concur in all the Methods of *Frugality* and prudent Management, and, in lower Life, of *Labour* and Industry, towards acquiring a competent Subsistence; and though it be ordinarily incumbent on the Husband to have the Direction of Affairs relating to this End; yet, as Circumstances sometimes require, that he should commit it to the Wife, so every Neglect in this Case, every Extravagance, every unnecessary Expence, wherein his Concurrence is not implied, is at once a Breach of Trust, and a Violation of her *Conjugal Love*: For Love will always consult the Inclination and Interest of those, who are the true Objects of it, and regulate itself accordingly.

4. I mention but one Duty more, which is mutually incumbent upon them, *viz.* that they should promote the Spiritual Good and Edification of one another, by recommending each other to God's Grace and Protection in their Prayers, and by admonishing and instructing each other in the Principles of Religion. The Business of *Admonition* and *Instruction*, by the Superiority of his Sex, seems more especially to belong to the Man, but when it so happens, (as it sometimes does) that the Woman is superior in all the Advantages of *Knowledge* and a good Understanding, and that the Man is either guilty of such Errors, or liable to such Dangers, as both deserve and require *Admonition*, the Woman is indulged the Liberty of speaking in such a Case: But then she must *intreat*, rather than *dictate*, and *insinuate* her Advice, rather than *assume*, on any Occasion indeed, but especially in the Presence of others, such *magisterial* Airs, as are neither agreeable to the Character of her Sex, nor the Relation, wherein she stands, as are both a

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Breach of *Decency*, and of that necessary Duty, which, *distinctly considered*, she owes to her Husband, and that is *Subjection*.

II. That where Nature has given the greatest Strength and Abilities, where she has made the Body and the Mind fittest to undergo the Labours and Toils, that are necessary to the Being and Well-being of the World, there she has designed the *Superiority*, can hardly be contested: That Women, in this Respect, are inferior to Men, and how necessary soever in *domestick* Affairs, with all the Use and Education imaginable, can never be qualified for the great Businesses of *Trade* and *Merchandise*, of making *Wars* abroad, and executing *Justice* at home, is demonstrably certain; and therefore, since Nature has made Men necessary for those Offices, she has certainly made them superior to such as are not able to perform them: Because it must be admitted, that where People are, in other Respects, equal, Strength of Body and Capacity of Mind will undoubtedly make them superior. And agreeable to this Ordination have been the Customs and Usages of all Nations, which, in some Places, have done a manifest Injury to the Sex, by placing them in a Condition not much above Slaves and *menial* Servants; and, even in Nations that have been accounted the most *civilised*, to provide for the Solace of Mankind, the Continuance of the World, and the Care of *domestick* Affairs, has been thought the chief End of their Creation.

With good Reason therefore might St Paul order all Wives to submit themselves unto their own Husbands, as unto the Lord; because the Husband is the Head of the Wife, even as Christ is the Head of the Church: As therefore the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the Wives be to their own Husbands in every Thing. The Apostle means in every Thing, that is innocent

innocent and lawful ; for it is certain, that a Wife owes no Subjection to her Husband against the Laws, either of God or Man. Religion and good Morals claim the first Place in her Obedience ; and though I think the Laws, or rather Customs of the Land, are very tender to Women, offending in the Company of their Husbands, as presuming them under some Kind of Constraint ; yet Religion has no such Consideration, but *includes* them *all under Sin*, who commit any sinful Actions. Where the Husband's Commands therefore are evidently contrary to any *natural* or *revealed* Law of God, they must be rejected with Abhorrence ; where his Commands are evidently unreasonable and indifereet, unusual and unheard-of, unbecoming the Age, the Credit, the Quality, and Condition of the Wife, they may be passed by and omitted, rather than despised : But where his Commands have nothing of this Nature in them, and relate only to such Matters, as are common and indifferent, her Disobedience will be faulty, if so be that Reason and Discretion, allowed-of Custom, Decency, and good Fame will not plead her Excuse ; for *I suffer not*, says St Paul, *a Woman* (whose greatest Ornament is that of a meek and quiet Spirit) *to usurp Authority over the Man ; but to be in Silence, with all Subjection* : And for this he subjoins these Reasons ; *for Adam was first formed, then Eve ; and Adam was not [first] deceived, but the Woman, being deceived, was [first] in the Transgression* ; where he plainly intimates, that her being *last* in the Creation, and *first* in the Transgression, made her altogether incapable of ruling ; since he, that was first formed, must naturally have a Right of Dominion over all, that descended from him ; and she, that transgressed first, when left to her own Conduct, could never be presumed afterwards qualified for a State of *Independence* ; and therefore we find it made a Part of the Sentence for her Transgression, that her *Desire* should

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be *towards her Husband*; i. e. "That she should
 "not be Mistress of herself, nor have any Desire
 "satisfied, but what was approved of by her
 "Husband; that she should be wholly under his
 "Power and *Tutelage*; and, though he should
 "command her many Things that were contrary
 "to her Will and Good-liking, yet should she not
 "be left at her Discretion, whether she would
 "obey." For, to make this Subjection a *Curse*
 to her, and her Posterity, it must needs be suppo-
 sed to relate to Things difficult and unacceptable;
 such as the foolish, surly, and imperious Humours
 of some Husbands are sometimes known to impose
 upon their Wives.

But though the *Punishment* of the one be, in some
 Measure, the *Privilege* of the other Sex; though
 the Wife, both by the Order of Things, and the
 Declarations of God's Will, be obliged to *obey*;
 yet ought not the Husband to employ his Autho-
 rity after an *arbitrary* and *tyrannical* Manner, but
 in a Way agreeable to the Nature and Ends of the
Conjugal State, which considers the Wife as allied to
 him by the strongest Ties of Love, Friendship, and
 common Interest. Well therefore does *St Paul*
 advise all Husbands, *not to be bitter against their*
Wives: Where the Phrase seems to be taken from
 the Offence and Disgust, which bitter Things give,
 when tasted, and not liked; and the Advice is,
 ——— that Husbands should not, by a peevish
 and morose, by a churlish and ill-natured Car-
 riage, make themselves as uneasy and ungrateful
 to their Wives, as *bitter Things* are distasteful to
 the *Palate*; or that they should not be provoked to
 Anger and Aversion, to unkind Words or Actions,
 by any Failings and Imperfections of their Wives,
 as the Palate and Stomach are provoked to Disgust
 or Loathing, by the Taste of any Thing very bit-
 ter: In a Word, that they should not use, either
 in

in Deed or Word, any Unkindness or Severity towards them.

There is a *Bitterness* of Language, that every one understands, and Words, that wound to the Quick: But then that which usually gives them their *Edge*, is the Consideration of the *Person* that speaks them, and the *Relation* he stands in to us. The Words of a *Stranger*, though never so severe, affect us but little; the Words of an *Enemy*, as proceeding from Malice, make no deep Impression: But the hard Words of Friends and Neighbours, of Acquaintance and Relations, occasion us Grief and great Concern. The ill Usage we receive from indifferent Persons stirs us to Anger and Indignation indeed, but 'tis against *them* only; whereas the ill Usage we receive at the Hands of those we love, occasions Pain and Uneasiness within. 'Tis the *Defeat* of our Expectation and Desire, that hurts us most on these Occasions: We know we love, and we would be beloved; we try to oblige, and we would again be obliged in our Turn; we favour and esteem them, and would, in like Manner, be favoured and esteemed by them: But, failing of these Returns, which we expected and desired, we are the more afflicted and disconsolate. 'Tis upon this Account, that harsh Words and ill Usage become so grievous to near Relations, because they are so little looked for and expected. The Mind is full of other Hopes, and surpris'd to find them so deceived; and therefore, when, instead of Gentleness and Patience, of Affability and Condescension, and every Thing, that can proceed from Consideration and Good-nature, the Wife generally meets with Moroseness and Peevishness, with Clamour and Impatience, with Revilings and ungenerous Upbraidings; this, to soft and tender Dispositions, is a cruel Usage, that

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sits heavy on the Mind, and wounds the Heart most *sensibly*.

Well therefore does the Apostle advise the Husband, that, *dwelling* with his Wife according to Knowledge, he should give Honour unto her, as unto the weaker Vessel, i. e. should treat her with all Lenity and Softness, even as Vessels which are of a *finer*, but weaker Contexture, are to be handled with greater Caution and Tenderness. And indeed, whoever gives himself Time to consider, to what extraordinary Difficulties and Sufferings God, by his Order and Appointment, has most unavoidably subjected and exposed the Women above Men, as well by their own natural Frame and Make, as by a great many sad, but usual Accidents; will see himself obliged, in common Pity, to deal gently with them, to sustain them under their Infirmities, and, by Patience and Forbearance, to endeavour to make their Burthn lighter. And if he considers farther, notwithstanding these Disadvantages, of what singular Use and Benefit a good and prudent Companion, in all the Vicissitudes of Life is; what *Solace* in Health, what *Comfort* in Sickness, what *Help* in Distress, what *Security* in Trouble is occasioned by her Means; and, above all, what Labour and Hardships, what Watchings and Disquietudes, as well as many *bumbling* Offices, she is content to bear, with all the Chearfulness and Delight imaginable, in bringing up the Children, that are the *Delight* of his Eyes, and the *Strength* of his Old-age; he that considers this, I say, instead of taking Pleasure in opposing and insulting the Wife of his Bosom, will find himself bound, in Gratitude, and by the mutual Pledges of their Love, to nourish and cherish her, even as his own Flesh.

4. *Between Master and Servant.*

AS we are many Members, says St Paul, in one Body, and all Members have not the same Office, but some are designed for nobler, and others for meaner Uses, and yet all conspire towards the Preservation, and more commodious Support of the whole ; so God hath ordained, that, in the civil or political Body, there should be such a Diversity of States and Conditions, that, each supplying the Necessities of the other, *there might, as the Apostle speaks, be no Schism in the Body, but that the Members might have the same Care one for another.* This is the true Reason, according to God's own Appointment, of the different Conditions of *Masters and Servants* : And, to give the former Precedence in this Matter, we shall, I. Consider what in Justice is required of them : And then, II. What in Return may reasonably be expected from the latter.

I. St Paul, treating of the Relations, wherein we stand towards one another, has comprised the whole Duty of Masters to their Servants in this short Sentence ; *Masters, give unto your Servants that which is just and equal, knowing, that ye also have a Master in Heaven* ; for, though just and equal Terms be of near Affinity, yet may they be considered, as having a different Signification, and so to give that, which is just to a Servant, is to deal with him according to the Contract and Agreement that is between us ; to give him what we have actually covenanted for, and what, in Point of Law, he may demand : But to give him what is equal, is to deal fairly, honestly, and kindly with him ; and to give him what is his Due in Reason and Conscience, although we have not formally contracted with him. So that there is this Distinction

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tion to be made between *Justice* and *Equity*, that *Justice* makes our *Contracts*, and *Equity* our *Consciences* the Measures of our Dealings with others. And accordingly,

1. In *Point of Justice*, every Master is obliged to stand to his Agreement, and give his Servants what they have contracted for, whether it be *Instruction* or *Wages*. *Instruction* is the Thing, for which *Apprentices* chiefly contract; for which they give their Money, their Time, and Labour; and therefore, (whether it be through *Design* or *Negligence*) to conceal from them that Skill, which properly belongs to them, and not to let them into that full Knowledge of their Business, according to the Measure of their Understanding and Capacity, is a Piece of great Injustice, and the Master, who does this, not only breaks his *Covenant*, and falsifies his Trust; but deceives his Servant of what he expected, and defrauds him of the Time and Money, that he pledged in his Hand for that Purpose. *Wages* are Things, for which common *Labourers* and *menial* Servants do contract, and for which they pay down their Time and Labour; and therefore a Master may as well agree for Goods with any Customer, receive the Price before-hand, and yet retain the Goods withal, as take his Servant's Time and Labour first, and then either deny, or retard, or curtail the Payment of his appointed Wages.

'Tis a wise Provision therefore, which the *Jewish* Law has made: *Thou shalt not oppress an hired Servant, that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy Brethren, or of thy Strangers, that are in the Land, within thy Gates. At his Day thou shalt give him his Hire, neither shall the Sun go down upon it; for he is poor, and setteth his Heart upon it; lest he cry against thee to the Lord, and it be Sin unto thee: For behold, says St James, the Hire of the Labourers, who have reaped down your Fields, which is of you kept back by Fraud,*

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Fraud, crieth, and their Cries have entered into the Ears of the Lord of Sabbath; who has himself expressly threatened, that he will be a swift Witness against those that use their Neighbour's Service for nought, and oppress the Hireling in his Wages.

2. In *Point of Equity*, every Master is obliged to deal fairly, honestly, and kindly with his Servants; and to give them that which is their Due in Reason and Conscience, although they have not *formally* contracted for it: And to this Purpose he is to treat them with Humanity and Good-nature, in order to make their Lives as easy as he can, consistently with the Performance of their Duty. All arbitrary and tyrannical Power over them he is to disclaim, and never put them upon any Hardships but what are agreeable to the Conditions of their Service. All his Commands must be mercifully fitted to their Strength and Capacity; all his Reproofs expressed without Rage or Passion, without Contumely or Insult; all his Corrections (if there be Necessity for any) inflicted with Tenderness and Compassion; and, though he has a Right to their whole Time and Labour, yet must not the Tasks he sets them be so immoderate as to allow them no competent Space for Rest and Intermision, for Attendance on God's Worship, and, at some proper Seasons, for innocent Sports and Recreation; that they may, for that Time, forget the Infelicity of their low Condition, and return to their Labour with more Alacrity.

Add to this, that he is to give them good Advice; set them a good Example; afford them Opportunities of serving God; instruct them in the Rules of Honesty and Justice, Truth and Faithfulness; excite them to Industry and Carefulness, and encourage their Diligence sometimes with an *uncovenanted* Reward. Nor must this be his Conduct to them in their Health only; but even in their *Sickness* he is to take Care that they want nothing

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thing that is fitting for their Condition, and in their Old-age, that some competent *Provision* be made for their comfortable Support: For I can hardly think, in Point of Equity, that long and faithful Services, especially in great and opulent Families, ought to be put off with the bare Payment of *stipulated Wages*, and not some additional Bounty bestowed, that may contribute to the Ease of an aged Servant, and to bring his grey Hairs with Quiet to the Grave.

These are some of the chief Duties which every Master owes to his Servants: And, in order to engage the Performance of them, let him consider, that he is Master of a Man of the *same Kind* with himself, who has thereupon a Right to be treated with *Humanity*; which, if he does not, he is no better than a *Tyrant*: That he is Master of a Man of the *same Civil Society*, and has therefore a Right to Equity and Justice; which, if he does him not, he is an *Oppressor*: That he is Master of a Man, who is of the *same Religion*, and has thereupon a Right to be treated *religiously*; which, if he neglects to do, *he hath denied the Faith, and is worse than an Infidel*: And, lastly, that he is Master of a Man who is his *Fellow-Servant*; for they have both one common *Master in Heaven, with whom there is no Respect of Persons*; to whom the *Bond and Free* are both alike; to whom the meanest Servant is as dear as the most honourable Master; by whom all shall be judged alike, and with the same Impartiality; and by whom the unjust and cruel Master, no less than the false and disobedient Servant, shall be punished with the utmost Severity. Wherefore remember, that thou hast a *Master in Heaven*, who, while he was on Earth, *took on him the Form of a Servant*, not only to give us an Example of his great Humility and Condescension, but to sanctify all Conditions, and to shew the World that God looks

looks not with Man's Eyes ; that he regards not Birth and Fortune, Quality and Title ; but that the meanest People in the World are acceptable to him, if they obey his Laws and do his Will : That it is Virtue and Religion only which recommend Men to his Favour, of which the poorest Servants in the World are full as capable as the most rich and mighty Masters : And, therefore, as he has made them Partakers of the same Grace here, and capable of the same Glory hereafter, so he commands them to treat them with all the Mercy and Humanity that their Condition requires ; and therefore, *If thy Brother, that dwelleth by thee, be waxen poor, thou shalt not rule over him with Rigour, but shalt fear thy God.*

II. The same Apostle that acquaints Masters with their Duty, is very exact and copious, in what, on the other Hand, is required of Servants. *Let as many Servants, says he, as are under the Yoke, count their own Masters worthy of all Honour, that the Name of God and his Doctrine be not blasphemed ; and let them be obedient to their Masters, and please them well in all Things, not answering again ; neither with Eye-service, as Men-pleasers, but in Singleness of Heart, fearing God, and as the Servants of Christ, doing every Thing heartily, as unto the Lord, and not unto Men : And this they must do, not only for the Good and Gentle, but also for the Froward ; because this is Praise-worthy, if a Man, for Conscience toward God, endure Grief, suffering wrongfully.* From whence it appears, that Honour and Reverence to their Master's Person, expressed by all the external Signs of Words and Actions ; Obedience to all his lawful Commands, without disputing ; Submission to his just Reproofs and Corrections, without murmuring ; Faithfulness in Trust, without purloining or embezzling ; Diligence in Business, without loitering or eye-serving ; a cautious Fear of offend-

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ing; an earnest *Desire* of pleasing; and a general *Conformity* to what they know are the *secret*, as well as *declared* Intimations of their Master's Will; are the great Lines and Characters of every Servant's Duty: And, for their Comfort and Encouragement herein,

Let it be considered, that, how mean and miserable soever a State of Servitude may be deemed, yet there are some Ingredients in it that make it easy, if not desirable. Servants, indeed, may have more of the *Labours* of Life; but then they have less of the *Cares* than other People. Their Concern is only in one Matter, *to do the Work that lies before them*; whereas others have a World of Things to think on. Their Masters they have only to please; but their Masters, perhaps, have all they deal with to court and humour. Themselves, for the most Part, are all they have to provide for; but their Masters have Wives, Children, and Relations to maintain at a great Expence. Whatever public Mischiefs, whatever Changes of Government, whatever Scarcity or Dearth happen, they find but little Alteration: They pay no *Rates* or *Taxes*, lose no gainful Employments, suffer nothing by the Malice or Insolence of *Parties*, and, in a Word, feel less Hardships and Misfortunes than their very Masters: And yet they have the Use of stately Houses and Gardens to live and walk in, their fragrant Flowers and rich Furniture to please their Smell and Sight, without ever considering what they cost.

These are Conveniencies that generally attend Servants of the lowest Condition: But then it must be considered, that an honest and faithful Discharge of their Duty will gain them the Favour and Esteem of all People; will make their Service useful and acceptable, and, consequently, very easy and delightful to themselves; will raise them, very probably,

bably, above the Condition they were born to, and lay a good Foundation for their own Self-subsistence, when once an Occasion shall offer. But, however this happen, they are to consider; that there is an unspeakable Pleasure and Satisfaction in having done their Duty, and that the Reflections of a good Conscience are a continued Feast; that *they serve not Men only, but God*, who sees all their Diligence and Industry, all their Faithfulness and Honesty, though removed from the Eye of their earthly Master, and *will reward them openly*; that the Time is coming when *of the Lord they shall receive the Reward of the Inheritance*; and, from being Servants, shall be made happy *in the glorious Liberty of the Sons of God*: And then, whatever Hardships or Uneasiness they undergo, whatever Want of Necessaries and Conveniencies they suffer, whatever Severities or cruel Inflictions they endure here, by the undue Rigour of their Masters or Superiors, they are confident that there will be an ample Amends made them by that God, who *judgeth righteously, and with whom there is no Respect of Persons*.

5. *Between Friend and Friend.*

OF all the *Relations*, wherein we stand towards one another, there is none more strict and binding, none more necessary and beneficial, than that of *Friendship*. For human Nature is imperfect; it has not Fund enough to furnish out a *solitary Life*; and the most delicious Place, barred from all Commerce and Society, would be insupportable. Besides, there are so many adverse Accidents attending us, that, without the Communion of Friendship, Virtue itself is not able to accomplish its End; because the best good Man, on several Occasions, often wants an Assistant to direct

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rect his Judgment, and quicken his Industry, and fortify his Spirits. *A Brother*, indeed, as the wise Man observes, *was born for Adversity, but there is a Friend, that sticketh closer than a Brother*; and therefore he that has found this precious Treasure has laid up a good Foundation against *the Day of Trouble*; because every true and real Friendship will be an *Alloy* to his Sorrows, an *Ease* to his Passions, a *Sanctuary* to his Calamities, a *Relief* of his Oppressions, a *Repository* of his Secrets, a *Counselor* of his Doubts, and an *Advocate* for his Interest, both with God and Man. And yet, as necessary and beneficial as this Relation is in all Conditions of Life, there is no one Thing wherein we mistake ourselves more. Men usually call them their Friends with whom they have an Intimacy; though that Intimacy, perhaps, is nothing else but an Union and Combination in Sin. The *Drunkard*, for Instance, thinks him his Friend who will swallow *Wine in Bowls*, and keep him Company in his *Debauches*; the *proud Man*, him his Friend who will blow up the Bladder, and indulge his Vanity with fulsome Flattery; and the *deceitful Man*, him his Friend that will aid and assist him in carrying on his *Schemes* of Fraud and Dishonesty: But, alas! this is so far from being Friendship, that it deserves a very different Appellation, and is, indeed, too near a Resemblance of the Practice of the *Prince of Darkness*, who is a Worker, together with Mens Passions, for the Destruction of their Souls. A true Friend loves his Friend so that he is very zealous for his Good; and certainly he that is really so will never be the *Instrument* of bringing him into the greatest Evil. How far soever, then, a Resemblance in Humour or Opinion, a Fancy for the same Business or Diversion, may, on some Occasions, be a Ground of Affection; yet this is generally allowed, both by *Moralists* and *Divines*, that Virtue is the only

only proper Foundation of Friendship, and that none but good Men are capable of it: And, among these, it may not improperly be defined to be
“ An industrious Pursuit of our Friend’s real Advantages, or obliging ourselves to do unto him all the good Offices that our Fidelity and Assistance, our Advice and Admonition, our Candour and Constancy can effect.”

1. Friendship, both in the *Latin* and *Greek* Languages, takes its Denomination from *Love*: And as Love is every-where the same, so there is no Principle more *faithful*, and what less consults the Arts of Diffimulation. A Friend therefore will pursue the Advantages of those he truly loves, as if they were his *own*; because there will be no great Difference between the Power of *Self-Love*, and the Love of a Person, whom, by the Laws of Friendship, he is bound to love as well as himself. From this Principle he espouses his Interest, whether the Opportunities of doing him Service be known to him, or not: He maintains his Honour and Right, though invaded by the most potent Adversary, or struck at by the most clandestine Malice. And as he suffers none, he can hinder, to injure his Character or Fortune; so he is especially careful himself, to avoid all *ill-bred Familiarities* in Company, or mercenary *Incroachments* upon his Good-nature, as very well knowing, that Friendship, though it be not *nice* and *exceptionous*, yet must not be *coarsely* treated; and that the Neglect of good Manners therein is the Want of its greatest *Ornament*. Above all, he is continually upon his Guard, to keep the Secrets, which his Friend has reposed in his Breast, with the most sacred *Taciturnity*; because a Discovery of these, in the Opinion of the wise Son of *Syrach*, who well understood the Laws and Punctualities of Friendship, is an Offence, of all others, the most provoking,

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ing, and the most unpardonable. For *whoſo diſcovereth Secrets, loſeth his Credit, and ſhall never find a Friend to his Mind. Love thy Friend, and be faithful to him; but, if thou bewrayeſt his Secrets, follow no more after him: For as one letteth a Bird out of his Hand, ſo haſt thou let thy Friend go, and ſhall not get him again. Follow after him no more; for he is too far off: He is as a Roe, eſcaped out of the Snare. As for a Wound, it may be bound up, and, after reviling, there may be a Reconciliation; but he, that bewrayeth Secrets, is without Hope.*

2. How far the Measure of mutual *Aſſiſtance* ought to extend among Friends, is not ſo eaſy a Matter, in each Particular, to determine; but this we may ſay, in general, that, as far as Opportunity, Diſcretion, and former Pre-engagements will give us Leave, we may be allowed to go; and that to break upon the Score of Danger or Expence is narrow-ſpirited; provided the Aſſiſtance may be given, without Ruin to ourſelves, or Prejudice to a *third* Perſon, without Breach of Honour, or Violation of Conſcience. Where the Thing is *unlawful*, we muſt neither aſk, nor comply. All Importunities againſt Juſtice are feveriſh Deſires, and muſt not be gratified. He that would engage another in an unwarrantable Action, takes him for an *ill* Perſon, and, as the Motion is an *Affront*, ought to be renounced for the *Injury* of his Opinion. But, where this is not the Caſe, we ought to treat our Friend as far as Prudence and Juſtice will permit, with all the Frankneſs and Generoſity imaginable; to *counſel* him, when he wants Advice; to *cheer* him, when he wants Comfort; to give unto him, when he wants Relief; and, even with ſome Hazard to ourſelves, to *reſcue* him, when he is in Danger: And, in doing of this, we ſhould conſider his Occaſions, and prevent his Deſires, and ſcarce give him Time to think, that he wanted our Aſſiſtance;

ance; because a Forwardness to oblige is a great *Grace* upon our Kindness, and that which doubles the intrinsic Worth of it.

3. It is the Observation of the wise King of *Israel*, *Woe to him, that is alone! For, if he falleth, he hath not another to help him up*: And this Observation is verified upon none so much, as upon him that is destitute of Friends; who, when he is under a Perplexity of Affairs, where a Determination is dubious, and yet of uncommon Consequence, cannot fetch in Aid from another Person, whose Judgment may be *greater* than his own, and whose Concern he is sure is no *less*. Every Man, in his own Affairs, is found to be less cautious, than a prudent Stander-by: He is generally too eagerly engaged, to make just Remarks upon the Progress, and Probability of Things; and, in such a Case, nothing is so proper as a judicious Friend; to temper the Spirits, and moderate the Pursuit; to give the Signal for Action, to press the Advantage, and strike the *critical* Minute. Foreign Intelligence may have a *Spy* in it, and therefore should be cautiously received; Strangers (I call all such, except Friends) may be *designing* in their Advice, or, if they be sincere, by mistaking the Case, they may give wrong Measures; but, now, an *old* Friend has the whole Scheme in his Head. He knows the Constitution, the Disease, the Strength and the Humour of him he assists; what he can do, and what he can bear; and therefore none so proper as he to prescribe; to direct the Enterprize, and direct the *main* Chance.

4. But, among all the Offices of Friendship, there is none that comes up to our aiding and assisting the Soul of our Friend, and endeavouring to advance his *spiritual* State, by Exhortations and Encouragements to all Virtue, by earnest and vehement Dissuasions from all Sin, and especially by

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kind and gentle *Reproofs*, where there is Reason to presume an Offence has been committed. This is so peculiarly the Duty of a Friend, that there is none besides so duly qualified for it. The *Reproofs* of a *Relation* may be thought to proceed from an Affectation of *Superiority*; of an Enemy, from a Spirit of Malice; and of an indifferent Person, from Pride or Impertinence, and so be slighted: But when they come from one, who *loves us as his own Soul*, and come armed with all the tender Concern, that an unfeigned Affection is known to dictate, they must of Course take Effect, and become irresistible. Self-Love, like a false Glass, generally represents the Complexion better than Nature has made it: — Men have no great Inclination to be prying into their own *Deformities*, and have such Unwillingness to hear of their Faults, that whoever undertakes the Work, had Need have a strong Prepossession in his Favour; and therefore the Friend, that alone is qualified for it, acts the Part of a *Flatterer*, and betrays the Offender into Security, when he sees him commit Things worthy of Blame, and yet silently passes them by: *Open Reproof*, says the wise Man, *is better than such secret Love*; for *faithful are the Wounds of a Friend, but the Kisses of an Enemy are deceitful*.

But though we are required to admonish our Friend, when we see him do amiss, yet the *Manner*, in which we are to do it, will require our utmost Care, and shew our Skill and Address, as well as our Love and Esteem for him. *A Word, fitly spoken*, says *Solomon*, *is like Apples of Gold in Pictures of Silver: As an Ear-Ring of Gold, and an Ornament of fine Gold, so is a wise Reprover upon an obedient Ear*: What *Gracefulness* there is in Colours judiciously chosen, and rightly put together; what *Agreeableness* there is in the most valuable Metals, so appositely placed, as to add to each other's Lustre;

tre; what *Beauty* arises from the richest and choicest Ornaments; such is the Gracefulness, such is the Excellency, such the Beauty of a wise Reproof, fitted to the Occasion of it, to the Person and Character of those, that reprove, and of those, that are reprov'd: And this, in the Case of Friends, ought certainly to be managed with all Candour and Kindness, with all Meekness and Humility, without any Signs of *Bitterness*, any Words of *Reproach*, or Airs of *Superiority*.

But though we are allowed, in this Manner, to reprove the Faults of our Friend, yet are we to remember, that this is to be done in *private*: And that no Care must be wanting, on our Parts, to conceal them from the Knowledge of others. And believe me, it is a great and noble Thing to cover the Blemishes, and excuse the Failings of a Friend; to draw a Curtain before his Errors, and to display his Perfections; to bury his Weakness in Silence, and proclaim his Virtues *upon the House-Top*. This, as one expresses it, is an Imitation of the Charities of Heaven, which, when the Creature lies prostrate in the Weakness of Sleep, spreads the Covering of Night and Darkness over it, to conceal it in that Condition: But as soon as our *Spirits* are refreshed, and Nature returns to its Morning *Vigour*, God then bids the Sun rise, and the Day shine upon us, both to advance and shew our *Activity*.

These are some of the Duties or approved Qualities of Friendship, *viz.* to be faithful in our Professions, zealous in our Services, prudent in our Advices, and gentle in our Reproofs to our Friend; to be dumb to his Secrets, silent to his Faults, and full of the Commendations of his Virtues: And, where these are mutually practis'd, there is less Danger of the remaining Duty, which is *Constancy*, or such a Stability and Firmness of Friendship, as overlooks and passes by all those lesser Failures of

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Kindness and Respect, that, through Frailties incident to human Nature, a Man may be sometimes guilty of, and yet still retain the same habitual Good-will, and prevailing Propensity of Mind to his Friend, that he had before. Alas! there is no expecting the Temper of *Paradise* in the present Corruption of the World. The best of People cannot be always the same, always awake and entertaining. The Accidents of Life, the Indispositions of Health, the Imperfections of Reason must be allowed for, nor must every ambiguous Expression, or every little Chagrin, or Start of Passion be thought a sufficient Cause of Disunion. *Ointment and Perfume*, says the wise Man, *rejoice the Heart*; so does the Sweetness of a Man's Friend: Whereupon it follows, *thine own Friend, and thy Father's Friend, forsake not*: To part with a tried Friend, and one that is grown old, as it were, in the Service of the Family, besides the Injustice done him, is both unreasonable *Levity*, such as argues a Mind governed by Caprice only; and egregious *Folly*, such as prodigally casts away one of the greatest Blessings of human Life: For a faithful Friend is a strong Defence; and he, that hath found such an one, hath found a Treasure. And, as nothing can countervail a faithful Friend, so, when we have once entered into that Relation, I know of nothing that should dissolve it, but either downright Malevolence, or incorrigible Vice. These indeed strike at the *Fundamentals*, and make a Correspondence *impracticable*: But, even when the Case comes to this unhappy Pass, there is still a Decency in the Manner of our Disunion, and Prudence seems to direct, that we should *draw off* by Degrees, rather than come to an *open Rupture*.

From what has been said on this Subject, it seems plainly to follow, that every one is not qualified to enter into the Relation of Friendship, wherein

wherein there is Occasion for Largeness of Mind, and Agreeableness of Temper; for Prudence of Behaviour, for Courage and Constancy, for Freedom from Passion and Self-conceit. A Man, that is fit to make a Friend of, must have Conduct to manage the Engagement, and Resolution to maintain it: He must use Freedom, without Roughness; and oblige, without Design. Cowardice will betray Friendship, and Covetousness will starve it: Folly will be nauseous; Passion is apt to ruffle; and Pride will fly out into Contumely and Neglect: And therefore to conclude with the Wisdom of the Son of *Syrach*, in relation to the Choice of a Friend; *If thou wouldst get a Friend, says he, prove him first, and be not hasty to credit him; for some Man is a Friend for his own Occasion, and will not abide in the Day of thy Trouble: As, again, some Friend is a Companion at the Table: In thy Prosperity he will be as thyself; but, if thou be brought low, he will be against thee, and hide himself from thy Face. Wherefore prove thy Friend first, and be not hasty to credit him.*

6. *Between Superiors in Rank, Fortune, Abilities, &c. and their respective Inferiors.*

HOWEVER we are born alike, and derived all from the same *Original*, yet, when we come into the World, there are certain Rights and Privileges, either *natural* or *acquired*, that occasion an *Inequality*, and give one Man a Superiority over another. As all Titles of Honour rose originally from the *Field*, and were the *Royal* Rewards of *martial* Adventures and Atchievements, though in After-ages dispensed to such, as had merited for their *civil* Conduct; so the common Consent of Mankind has always accounted them *honourable*, and that the Persons, where they reside,

whether by *Descent*, or *Creation*, deserve a *Deference* and *Respect* extraordinary. *Wisdom*, or *Knowledge* of any *Kind*, as the wise *Man* observes, raises *Men* above the common *Level*, and abundantly compensates the *Obscurity* of *Birth*: *Exalt her* therefore, says he, and *she will promote thee*; *she will bring thee to Honour*; *she will give to thine Head an Ornament of Grace*; and a *Crown of Glory* will *she deliver to thee*. *Riches* are so universally courted, that every one sees what *Respect* they demand, wherever they appear, and how they seem to atone for *personal* Defects, even when fallen into *Hands*, that make no *laudable* Use of them; but, when dispensed in *Acts* of *Beneficence* and *Generosity*, how they attract the *Eyes* of all, and make the *Man* shine with a distinguished *Lustre*.

But though these *Excellencies* create a *Superiority*, and set the *Possessors* of them in an *Elevation* above others; yet will they by no *Means* countenance *Pride*, or give them a *Licence* to trample upon those that they thus surmount: For *who maketh thee to differ from another*? And *what hast thou, that thou didst not receive*? Thy *Descent* from an ancient and honourable *Family*, thy great *Proficiency* in *Arts* and *Sciences*, thy *immense* Increase of *Wealth* and *Riches*, nay the very *Power* to eat thereof, and *Heart* to make use of them, now that thou hast them, are all from the *Gift* and *Ordination* of *Providence*, which might have sent thee into the *World* an *Idiot*, a *Beggar*, or (what is as ill) a *Niggard* of thy *Wealth*; and therefore, since thou didst receive it from *God*, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?

But, if even all these *Accomplishments* were our own, yet are they of so *precarious* and uncertain a *Texture*, of so *imperfect* and limited an *Use*, that they can, by no *Means*, be the proper *Matter* of our *Boasting*. In relation to *Wealth*, which is equally

equally applicable to Nobility and Learning, St Paul enjoins his Son *Timothy* to charge them that are rich in this World, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain Riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all Things to enjoy. The great Strength of the Argument, we may observe, is couched in the Word *uncertain*; for as nothing is more fluctuating than Wealth, which every Element can destroy; so the Infatuation must needs be great, to place a Trust on that, which is so flitting and unsteady; or (in Solomon's Phrase) to set one's Eyes on that which is not; for Riches certainly make themselves Wings, and fly away, as an Eagle towards Heaven.

But, admitting they were more permanent, yet still we may be allowed to ask, wherein are they to be accounted of? Since there are so many Miseries incident to human Life, wherein they can give us no Aid or Relief. Is a Man, for Instance, afflicted in his Body with Pain? The Indies are not a competent Price for a Minute's Ease, for an Hour's Sleep. Is he persecuted in his Name with Reprach? 'Tis not whole Ingots of Gold that can stop the Mouth of Fame: Nay, many Times the Obloquy itself is but the Progeny of Wealth, of Wealth breeding Envy, and Envy Detraction. But if the Sore lies deeper yet, and affects his immortal Part, he is still farther removed from the Possibility of Relief. If he suffers as a Slave under the Dominion of Vice, no Treasure can redeem him from that Vassalage: If he groans under a Sense of Guilt, and the Terrors of an accusing Conscience; alas! Gold is no Balm to a wounded Spirit: The Luxuries, which that has supported, may help to pierce, but it has no Power to heal: Or lastly, if the Soul fall finally under the Punishment of Sin, there is no commuting that Penance, no buying off that Smart: Riches abused may in-

deed swell the Account, and multiply the Stripes; but this is *the Day of Wrath*, wherein they will not, wherein they cannot bribe the Remission of one Pain. Since then the Accomplishments of Birth, Fortune, and Erudition, are not sufficient to secure us in our most important Interests; *Thus saith the Lord, let not the wise Man glory in his Wisdom, neither let the mighty Man glory in his Strength; let not the rich Man glory in his Riches; but let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth, and knoweth me.*

II. Another Duty that Persons of this Eminence owe to their Inferiors, is not to *despise them*, upon the Account of their Poverty, Ignorance, or obscure Parentage, so long as they are honest and harmless Men; but to be kind and condescending, in relieving the Poor, instructing the Ignorant, and setting them at all Times a good Example. Think we never so long, we cannot imagine any Thing that could possibly induce God to create the World, and to stock this sublunary Part of it with Mankind, but either the Manifestation of his *Glory*, or the Communication of his *Goodness*. His Glory seems to come *secondary* in View, as *subsequent* to the Work, when finished; the prime *impulsive* Cause and Reason was certainly his Goodness. And, if Goodness was the great Motive of communicating Existence to Mankind, we cannot but conclude, that the same Goodness attended the Consultations of his Wisdom, when he appointed them their different Stations and Conditions of Life: For with him there is no Respect of Persons; *the Rich he regardeth no more than the Poor, the Prince than the Peasant; for they are all the Work of his Hands.* And, if they be the Work of his Hands, we cannot but suppose that they are as *excellent* in their Kind as those that appear in the World in a brighter *Figure*. The Sun, Moon, and all the *Host of Heaven,*

pen, are, at the first Sight, mighty Demonstrations of the Creator's Power and Godhead; but those that look farther into the Works of Nature can shew us the Traces of the same Almighty Hand in the Texture of the smallest *Insect*, or on the Surface of the meanest Plant: They can behold and admire, I say, the Wonders of creating Providence in an *Ant* as much as an *Elephant*; and in the lowest *Skrub* as much as in the tallest *Cedar* of *Lebanon*: For the smaller the Compound is, the more curious the Workmanship, and the more curious the Workmanship, the greater the Skill both in contriving and compleating it. And, in like Manner, the Condition that makes but a mean Appearance in the World is not without its Excellencies, and the Marks of God's Favour and Benignity abiding upon it.

The poor Man, rising with the Sun, directeth his Prayers and Orisons to God, his chiefest Comfort and Support, beseeching him to bless his Family, to assist them with his Grace, and to protect them with his Providence. *He goeth forth to his Work and to his Labour until the Evening*: On his Return home he is received with the Smiles and undissembled Love of his Wife and Family, eats his Morsel with Contentment and Thankfulness, and lieth down to sleep, in full Assurance of his Protection *who neither slumbereth nor sleepeth*.

—Where then are the *Kings of the Earth*, and the great Men, and the rich Men, and the chief Captains, and the mighty Men? Where is the *Wise*? Where is the *Scribe*? Where is the *Disputer* of this World? God hath chosen the foolish Things of this World to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak Things of the World to confound the Things which are mighty; and the base Things of the World, and Things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and Things which

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which are not, to bring to nought Things that are, that no Flesh should glory in his Presence.

It is the Observation of the *wise Man*, and a very important one it is, *whoso mocketh the Poor reproacheth his Maker*, i. e. finds Fault with the Dispensations of Providence: For, since the poor Man cannot help his Station in Life, the Reproach falls ultimately upon God; *but he that honoureth his Maker, hath Mercy upon the Poor*. The greatest Man living, therefore, must not disdain to be told, that he *who made him in the Womb made likewise the Poor*, and fashioned them both alike; that human Nature, even the meanest Guise, as being the Image of God, cannot be contemptible; that the Outside and Trappings of the Man make no Part of his Species; and that, in the Sight of God Almighty, no Man is better looked upon for *loading himself with stink Clay*: He must not disdain to be told, that the Man of Thousands and ten Thousands is not properly the Owner of one Farthing; is but a *Steward* in God's Family, his *Revenues* consequently his *Debts*, and the larger his Estate, the greater his Labour and Charge to give every one their *Portion of Meat in due Season*; which if he neglects to do, and begins to live luxuriously himself, and to beat and oppress his Fellow-Servants, *his Lord will come in a Day when he looked not for him, and will cut him asunder, and appoint him his Portion with Unbelievers*. Above all, let not great Men disdain to be reminded of the high but dangerous Station wherein Providence has placed them; of the Support of Parentage and Alliances, of the Accomplishment of Parts by a liberal Education, the Advantages of their Wealth and large Fortune, the Force of their Authority, and the Influence of their Example; and, from a Sense and right Estimate of these (as they would do Honour to the Families from whence they spring, and improve the Talents committed to their Trust,

and

and make themselves *Friends of the Mammon of Unrighteousness*; as they would gain the inward Esteem of Mankind, whereof their outward Titles are sometimes false Ecchoes) let them resolve to pursue the Practice of holy *Job*, (a Person of high Rank and Dignity) and, after his gracious Example, become *Eyes to the Blind, and Feet to the Lamè*: Let them *draw out their Soul to the Hungry, and satisfy the afflicted Soul, undoing the heavy Burthens, and breaking every Yoke*. Then shall their *Light break forth as the Morning*, when every *Ear that hears them shall bless them*, and every *Eye that sees them shall give Witness to them*, and glorify their *Father which is in Heaven*.

These are the Duties wherein Persons of high Birth and Fortune stand indebted to their Inferiors: And what their Inferiors, in Return, owe to them may be reduced to these two Particulars, *Honour and Gratitude*: Honour, where *eminent Qualities* are observed; and Gratitude, where *Favours and Obligations* have been received.

I. As Honours were at first designed for the Reward of great and laudable Actions, so were they made *successive*, for the farther Encouragement and Promotion of them. Were the Honours, which Men propose to themselves in performing any great Achievements, to terminate with their Lives, this would discourage their Zeal, and put a Damp upon their Resolutions to undertake them; but when they understand that the *Renown* which will accrue to them will be made *hereditary*, and descend to their latest Posterity, this is such a Spur to illustrious Actions, as he, who has any Sense of Ambition, or Love for his Country, cannot but feel: And for this Reason it is presumed, that Persons of noble Birth, having the *Examples* of their Ancestors, and the Sense of *Shame* (if they should fall short of their Virtues, and incur the Imputation
of

of Degeneracy) always before their Eyes, should exert themselves, with a more than ordinary Vigour and Resolution, to avoid that Reproach, and, consequently, to *signalise* themselves in every Thing that is excellent and praise-worthy. Upon these Accounts it is generally supposed, that Persons of high Titles and honourable Parentage are Men of real Worth; and, though they may chance to be the *Reverse*, yet, in Compliance to the End of *civil* Institution, they ought to be treated with external Observance, lest, in the Person of *Particulars*, the *whole Order* should think itself neglected. In like Manner, when any *Honour* is conferred by a *Prince*, though the Person should not have all the *Merit* that might be expected, yet an outward Regard is certainly due to him, because the Expressions of Royal Favour have the same Efficacy, in distinguishing the Objects of it, that the *Royal Stamp* has to put a Difference between *Coins*, and even sometimes to give a current and intrinsic Value to that which has little or none of itself. And so again, though Riches are sometimes found in the Hands of Persons that have the least Pretence to personal *Merit*; though not only *Folly*, (as *Solomon* observes) but sometimes *Vice* and *Injustice*, are set in high Dignity; yet the Reasons of outward Respect are oftener founded on the *relative* than *real* Characters of Men. So that, as Riches make a Man more considerable in the *Commonwealth*, and more capable of serving its Interest, those that are the Possessors of them have a Right, at least, to some Share of our Regard in their *civil Capacity*, how little soever they may deserve it in their *private*. But where, in Conjunction with an ample Fortune, we discover any generous and laudable Qualities; where the Person whom the King *delights to honour* puts on *Righteousness*, as *Job* expresses it, for his *Cloathing*, and Judgment for his *Robe*

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Robe and his *Diadem*; there the Degrees of our Honour and Respect can hardly transcend the Bounds of our Duty.

II. Another Duty which *Inferiors*, those especially that have received Favours and Obligations, owe to their *Superiors*, is *Gratitude*; which consists in a Sensibility of Kindness received, and an Endeavour either to acknowledge or repay them. *To repay them* perhaps by an equivalent Return may not be in the Person's Power, and, consequently, cannot be his Duty; but Thanks are a Tribute payable by the poorest, since none is so indigent as not to have a Heart to be sensible, and a Tongue to express his Sense of a Benefit, when he hath received it. *What shall I render unto the Lord for all his Benefits towards me?* Says holy David, reflecting upon the Divine Goodness to him: And, in like Manner, under a lively Apprehension of any human Favours, "What shall I do (should the grateful Man say to himself) for such a Friend, for such a Patron, who hath so frankly, so generously, so unconstrainedly, relieved me in my Distress; supported me against such an Enemy; supplied, cherished, and upheld me, when Relations would not know me, or at least could not help me; and, in a Word, has prevented my Desire, and out-done my Necessities? I can never return him a Kindness any Ways answerable; but I may, as I am in Justice bound, express my thankful Remembrance of what he has done: I can take all fair Occasions to commemorate his good Offices, and, by the little Services I am able to do, testify my Willingness to make him a full Requital, if I could." For as, in the Matter of *Debt*, he who cannot pay *all* must compound, and pay as far as he is able; so, in the Matter of *Beneficence*, when we cannot make a compleat Requital, we are obliged

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ged to make some small Composition ; and, if we can do no more, to express a grateful Sense of what we have received; and give *thankful* Words for *beneficial* Actions ; which all generous Benefactors esteem the *noblest* Return, except it be to bless God for these great Instruments of his Bounty to us, to offer up our Prayers for their Prosperity, both *spiritual* and *temporal*, and to intercede with Heaven, since we find ourselves insolvent, to make them a full Requital *at the Retribution of the Just.*

SECT. III.

Of Mercy in general.

MERCY, in the general Notion of it, is a *Trouble* or Uneasiness of Spirit, conceived at some *Evil* that has befallen another, and attended with an ardent Desire to help *him* out of it : And from hence we may perceive that it is a *mixed* Passion, compounded of *Sorrow* and *Desire* ; Sorrow, for the Evil of the *Patient*, and Desire to deliver him from it. But here a Question will arise, what Kind of Evil is the proper Object of this Sorrow, or what is it that should recommend a Man to our Pity ? Some very considerable *Moralists* and *Divines* will allow no other Evil to be capable of Pity but the Evil of *Pain*, and that only when it is *undeserved* : But why Sin should not fall under our Pity, as well as any other Evil (since an irreclaimable *Sinner* is the most miserable Object we can think of) I cannot conceive ; And, though I readily grant that *Affliction*, when joined with Innocence, is very apt to excite Compassion, yet, upon the whole, I cannot but think that the *guilty* Sufferer is more to be pitied than the *innocent* ; since I can pity him for his *Demerit* and his Misery
too ;

too; whereas the latter is pitiable only for his *Misery*. The guilty Patient indeed is not to be pitied so much for his direct Misery, because he deserves it; but then he is more to be pitied, for his Desert and Misery *together*, than the other is for his Misery *only*: And I make no Doubt but that our compassionate Saviour, when he wept over *Jerusalem*, relented as much for the *Sins* as for the *Vengeance* that was hanging over that unhappy City, and that, had these two great *tragick* Scenes been at once presented before him, the Slaughter of the *innocent*, and the Destruction of the *guilty* People, he would have found more to be pitied in the *latter* than in the *former* Tragedy.

This being premised, concerning the Extent of Mercy and Compassion, that it is conversant about Evils of all Kinds, whether *spiritual* or *temporal*, deserved or undeserved, we shall now proceed to consider, 1. Some of the *Obligations* and *Reasons*; and, 2. Some of the *Motives* and *Inducements* we all lie under to the Practice of this Virtue.

I. The *Sticks* indeed are so far from accounting *Mercy* a Virtue, that, according to the Vogue of their *Morality*, it passes for a *Sin*, for an Instance of Weakness and Littleness of Soul, and such a Piece of *Softness* and Effeminacy, as does not comport with the Character of their *wise Man*, who is allowed indeed to relieve, but not to be troubled for the Afflicted; to add, if he can, to the Tranquillity of *their* Minds, but not to suffer his *own* to be discomposed at the Sight of any Calamity. This however, instead of improving, is debasing human Nature, and robbing it of that Happiness and Security, which we may reasonably promise ourselves from the Protection of Society; for the Protection of Society, without a kind Compassion and Inclination to assist, avails us nothing: It is then only that we reap the Benefit of Society,
when

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when there is the same Sympathy in the *politick*, that there is in the *natural* Body; when, if one Member suffer, all the Members suffer with it, or, if one Member rejoice, all the Members rejoice with it.

Upon the Account, then, that this Passion is of such happy Advantage to the present Condition of Man, God has been pleased to *plant* in our Nature so strong a Propensity to it, that, when we read or hear of the Calamities of other Men, our Bowels yearn by a natural *Sympathy*, though they be never so far distant from us, and are no otherwise related to us than as they partake of the same common Nature. Nay, though we know the Calamities, which we read and hear, to be nothing but *romantick Fictions*, yet still the very Imagination of them melts us into Tears, in Despite of our Will and Reason; an evident Instance of the general *Sympathy*, which influences all Men; since we can neither hear, nor see, nor imagine other Miseries, without being touched with a sensible Pain and Affliction for them.

Nor has God given this Propensity to the Soul only, but, together with that, has disposed the very Make and Figuration of the Body so that the whole Man might stand inclined to Acts of Mercy and Commiseration. How the animal Spirits operate is hard to determine; but this we know, that, whenever we happen to cast our Eyes upon a Man that is *wounded*, we find a sudden Tide of them thronging towards those Parts of our own Body, which answer to the Parts of the wounded Man, and so raising a Sentiment of Pity or Compassion in us, which we can no more help being affected with, than we can hinder our *animal Spirits* from flowing to, and affecting that Part of our Body, which corresponds to the Object before us.

Since the God of Nature, therefore, has laid the Ground of this Affection in the Composition both
of

of Soul and Body ; since he has implanted in us such a mutual *Sympathy*, as makes another's Misery our Pain, which, without doing Violence to ourselves, we cannot be eased of, without wishing, at least, to be able to remove it ; this I take to be an eternal and immutable Reason why we ought to be merciful to one another, especially considering, that this is farther incumbent upon us, both in Imitation of the *Nature*, and in Conformity to the *Will* of our great Creator.

The Doctors of the *Talmud*, speaking of the Employment of God before the Creation of the World, lay it down for a Truth, that he was contriving how to be merciful to Mankind : And *contriving* indeed he was, how to shew Mercy to Man, but not by the Way of *Study* and Employment of Mind, as these idle *Dreamers* grossly imagine. His Mercy is essential to his Nature, and therefore it is said to be *from everlasting, to endure for ever*, and himself is stiled *the God of all Grace*, and *the Father of Mercies*, whose Compassions and *the Sounding of whose Bowels* fail not, and who *keepeth Mercy for Thousands, forgiving Iniquity, Transgression, and Sin*. And, indeed, if we consider a little the Method of God's Dealing with Mankind, in creating them at first, in sustaining them with his *Power*, in protecting them with his *Providence*, in sanctifying them with his *Grace*, and, above all, in redeeming them from eternal Ruin by the costly Price of his own Son's Blood, we cannot but observe a continued Series of Divine Mercy and Compassion running through every Age of the World, and through every Moment of each Man's Life.

Now, for the same Reason that God does himself continually delight in Acts of Mercy, and takes a peculiar Pleasure in describing himself by that particular Attribute ; for the same Reason ; it must necessarily be his Will, that we should imitate him

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in what he himself finds so great Complacency. *Be ye therefore merciful, says our Blessed Saviour, as your Father, which is in Heaven, is merciful; Put on, as the Elect of God, Bowels of Mercy, Kindness, Meekness, Long-suffering; and be of the same Mind one towards another, weeping with those that weep, and bearing one another's Burthens, in order to fulfil the Law of Christ.*

And well might the Law of Christ prescribe us this Duty, when he himself, while on Earth, in Commiseration to Mankind, went about *healing every Sickness and every Disease; and seeing the Multitudes fainting, and scattered abroad like Sheep wanting a Shepherd, ἐπιλαλῶν αὐτοὺς ἐν ὀνόματι κυρίου, was moved with Compassion on them; so we render it indeed, but the Expression is too high and pregnant for any verbal Translation: When he himself, even now that he is in Heaven, retains still the same Tenderness of Spirit, though, in other Respects, impassible, and for this Reason is called a merciful High-Priest, that cannot but be touched with a Feeling of our Infirmities.*

Well might the Law of Christ prescribe us this Duty, which, of all others, is most apposite to our present State and Circumstances: For, since every Man is liable to become miserable, nothing is more just and equitable than that we should deal with others as we would be dealt by. Put the Case then, (as you very well may) that you were now as miserable as that wretched Creature is that craves your Succour and Relief, would you not desire Relief with the same Importunity that he does? Since the Sense of Misery and the Desire of Mercy are inseparable, doubtless you would: And is there not all the Reason in the World, then, that you should grant him what you would ask for yourself, if you were in his Circumstances, and he in yours? What therefore the Apostle says, in relation to Offences,

Offences, may, with a small Variation, be applied to other Infelicities of Life; *Brethren, if a Man be overtaken with Misfortunes, ye which are prosperous, relieve such an one, in the Spirit of Compassion, considering thyself, lest thou also be afflicted.*

And well might our Holy Religion recommend this Affection to us, since, of all others, it is one of the most noble and excellent Dispositions of the Mind: So *noble*, that the most generous and brave Spirits of Antiquity, those whom *Paganism* has *deified* and *Christianity* *sainted*, whom History mentions with Honour, and Malice itself is ashamed to *calumniate*, have all along been famed and remarkable for it: And so *excellent*, that no other Passion but Love or Charity, from whence it results, is to be compared with it. Other Passions are in their own Natures indifferent, neither good nor evil in themselves, but *equally determinable* to either, and, for the most Part, are actually determined to the *wrong Side*. They are generally irregular, either in the Degree or in the Object; are either misgoverned or misplaced; and, when most orderly managed, the highest Character they can pretend to is only to be Instruments and Servants to Virtue: But now this Affection of Pity and Compassion rises higher than Indifferency: It is of itself a virtuous Disposition, needs only actual Exertion to make it a direct Virtue, and then its own Excellency will place it among the highest Orders. For this Reason, I suppose it is, that God himself declares, *I will have Mercy, and not Sacrifice*, i. e. Mercy rather than Sacrifice; for, when Matters fall out so that we cannot conveniently attend both, he had rather that we should testify our Love to him by Acts of *Kindness*, done for his Sake to our Brethren, whose Necessities call for immediate Help, than that we should neglect these, and em-

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ploy ourselves in the most solemn Acts of Worship, which intirely terminate in him, who neither needs them, nor can receive any Advantage by them: And for this Reason, not improbably, it is, that, of all the Affections implanted in Man's Mind, our Blessed Saviour thought proper to select and adopt this only in the sacred Number of his few Beatitudes; *Blessed are the Merciful; for they shall obtain Mercy.* Which leads us,

II. To the *Motives* and *Inducements* of our practising this Duty. And to this Purpose let it be considered, that, though Mercy, as well as other Virtues, may be sometimes abused and ill-treated, yet, generally speaking, nothing more naturally recommends us to the Compassion of others than being of a merciful and benign Temper ourselves. And for this Reason it is that the *wise Man* advises, *Give to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what Evil shall be upon the Earth:* As if he had said, "Be careful, whilst thou art in Prosperity, to lay
"an Obligation on as many as thou canst, by
"Works of Mercy and Bounty; for thou knowest not how the World may change: *Riches may*
"make themselves Wings and fly away; and it is not
"in the Power of all thy Art and Skill to stop
"them in their Flight, or bring them down to
"thy Lure, when they are once upon the Wing.
"A raging Fire, a violent Storm, unseasonable
"Weather, undutiful Children, the Falseness of
"Friends, or the Malice of Enemies, may consume an Estate in a short Time, which thou hast
"a long While been gathering: And therefore,
"if, whilst thou hast it, thou art kind and merciful, thy Kindness to others (shouldest thou chance
"to be deprived of it) will be remembered to thy
"Advantage, and engage them to give into thy
"Cup, as our Saviour expresses it, *good Measure,*
"pressed down, shaken together, and running over."

But,

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But, if this should not happen, if even Mankind, whom thou hast obliged, should fail in Point of Gratitude, yet *God is not unrighteous, that he should forget thy Work, and Labour of Love, in that thou hast ministered to the Distressed. For this Thing he shall bless thee in all thy Works, and in all that thou puttest thine Hand unto; he shall deliver thee in the Time of Trouble; he shall preserve thee from the Hand of thine Enemies, and strengthen thee on thy Bed of Languishing.* For this Thing he will bless thee in thy Relations and Posterity, *the Seed of the Merciful shall be mighty on the Earth, and the Generation of the Upright shall be blessed;* and therefore, *cast thy Bread upon the Waters,* (as the wise Man elegantly expresses the Duty of Beneficence) *and thou shalt find it after many Days;* for thy Childrens Children shall find the Advantage of it. For this Thing he will bless thee in (what is more than all) the Salvation of thine immortal Soul; for, as *he shall have Judgment without Mercy on him who hath shewed no Mercy,* so, in him that hath shewed it, *Mercy shall rejoice against Judgment,* when, in that great and terrible Day of the Lord, he shall meet with a gracious Sentence from his Judge, and a kind Reception in the Kingdom prepared for him. And therefore, to sum up all in that elegant Discourse of *Lactantius,* concerning Works of Mercy and Charity: “ Since human Nature, says “ *he, is weaker than that of other Creatures, who “ came into the World armed with defensive Pow- “ ers, therefore our wise Creator has given us a “ tender and merciful Disposition, that we might “ place the Safeguard of our Lives in mutual Af- “ sistances of one another; for, being all created “ by one God, and sprung from one common “ Parent, we should reckon ourselves a-kin, and “ conjoined to all Mankind; and, being ourselves “ obnoxious to Misery, we may more comfortably*

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“ hope for Help, in case we need it, when we are
 “ conscious to ourselves that we gave it to others.
 “ If any be hungry, then, let us feed him; is he
 “ naked, let us cloathe him; is he wronged by
 “ a powerful Oppressor, let us rescue and relieve
 “ him. Let our Doors be open to Strangers, and
 “ such as have no Habitation: Let not our As-
 “ sistance be wanting to Widows and Orphans;
 “ and (what is a mighty Instance of Charity) let
 “ us redeem the Captive, deliver the Prisoner, vi-
 “ sit the Sick, and, in case he should die, not suf-
 “ fer him to want the Conveniency of a Grave.
 “ These are the Works and Offices of Mercy:
 “ And, to prepare us for these, let us not set our
 “ Heart on Money, but transmit it into the hea-
 “ venly Treasures, where it shall be kept to our
 “ eternal Advantage, under the Custody of God
 “ himself.”

SECT. IV.

Of Mercy to Mens Souls.

MERCY, as we said before, has properly *Misery* for its Object; and the Miseries in-
 cident to human Life are of two Kinds, either
 such as affect the *Body*, or such as affect the *Soul* of
 Man. The Miseries, which affect the Soul, are
 either *Blindness*, and *Ignorance* in Matters of the
 greatest Importance; or *Malice*, and *Obstinacy* of
 Will in wicked and pernicious Courses: To the
 former belongs the Business of *Instruction*; and to
 the latter, the Office of *Reproof*; and our Purpose
 is to see what Duties are required of us, with re-
 spect to both these.

I. Blindness, and Ignorance in Things of the
 highest Moment for us to know, is one of the
 greatest

greatest Miseries that can possibly happen to the Soul in this Life : For, as Souls are designed to live happy or miserable for ever, which Happiness depends upon the right Use of their *Liberty*, and that upon their *Knowledge*, how to use and determine it, it will be impossible for them to attain eternal Happiness, or escape eternal Misery, without Knowledge to steer and direct them right. And now, what a miserable Case is this, to have an eternal Interest at Stake, and not to know how to manage it ? To be travelling on this narrow Line of Life, which divides the *boundless* Continents of Happiness or Misery, and not see one Step of our Way before us, nor perceive whither we are going, until we are gone beyond all Recovery ? Should we behold a *blind* Man, walking upon the Brink of a fatal *Precipice*, without any Guide to direct his Steps, and secure him from the neighbouring Danger, would not our Hearts ache, and our Bowels yearn for him ? Should we not call out to him, and warn him of his Danger, and make all the Haste we could to take him by the Hand, and conduct him to a Place of Safety ? And is it not a much more deplorable Sight, to see a poor ignorant Wretch, walking blindfold on the *Brink* of Hell, and, for Want of Sight to direct him *Heavenwards*, ready to blunder at every Step into the Pit of Destruction ? Certainly, if we duly understood the Worth and Value of Souls, such a woeful Spectacle could not but affect us with Commiseration, and excite us to employ all our Faculties, to convince him of the Danger he is incurring, and to instruct him, by what *Means* he may avoid it : For this is the proper Act of Mercy, which such a miserable Case requires, *viz.* to endeavour to dispel that fatal Ignorance which surrounds Mens Minds, and to enlighten them with all the Principles of Religion, that are neces-

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fary to conduct them to eternal Happiness. And this, by the Way, may recommend those liberal Foundations, which are now so frequent in this Nation, whereby great Numbers of Persons, by a virtuous Education, are instructed in the Doctrines of Faith, and seasoned with the Principles of pure Religion, that so, knowing their Duty, and the manifold Obligations to it, they might not fall blindfold into everlasting Perdition; and whereby the poorer Sort, that are least of all capable of instructing their Children, or making any competent Provision for them, have pious Grounds to hope, that their *Sons may grow up as young Plants, and their Daughters be as the polished Corners of the Temple.*

How much we stand obliged, not only in *Fidelity* to God, who has committed the Souls of our Children and Dependents to our Charge, and will one Day require an Account of them at our Hands, but in Mercy likewise to *them*, that they may not *perish for Lack of Knowledge*, to inform their Minds in all the Duties and Obligations of Religion, is what we had Occasion to consider before; and shall only take Notice farther, that, besides those, who are thus immediately related to us, Mercy requires us to take all fair Opportunities of insinuating the Knowledge of Divine Truths to any, we know destitute of it; or, if we ourselves cannot do it, without incurring the Imputation of *Impertinence* or *Pedantry*, to recommend them to others, whose Authority with them is greater, and from whose Hands the kind Office may be better taken; for what *St Paul* says to *Timothy*, is applicable to all Christians that have a Capacity for it; *the Servant of the Lord must be gentle unto all Men, apt to teach, in Meekness instructing those, that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them Repentance, to the Acknowledgment of the Truth; and that they may recover themselves*

themselves out of the Snare of the Devil, who are taken Captive by him at his Will.

And this gives us too sad an Occasion to lament the great Decay of religious Discourse in common Conversation, though certainly the most easy and effectual Way of Instruction. Sermons may do good, and Books may edify; but, being designed for general Use, they cannot come down to particular Cases; they cannot suit the Condition and Capacities of all Men: They want that Life and Energy, that Address and Insinuation, which only dwell on the Tongue: They are indeed but *dead Things*, in Comparison of those *lively Births* of Piety, which come from the Mouth in Conversation, when Hearts, truly touched with the Love of God, communicate their Light and Heat, and blow up one another's dormant Fires into a burning and shining Flame. *As Iron sharpeneth Iron, says Solomon, so a Man sharpeneth the Countenance of his Friend,* i. e. quickens and enlivens them, and sets a new Edge, both upon his Wit, and upon his Passions and Affections. With good Reason therefore does our holy Religion direct, that we should *provoke unto Love, and to good Works, by exhorting one another; that our Speech should be always with Grace, seasoned with Salt; and that no corrupt Communication should proceed out of our Mouths, but that which is good to the Use of edifying, that it may minister Grace unto the Hearers.*

And indeed, if we consider the End and Design of Speech, we can hardly imagine, but that it was given us for higher and more material Purposes, than to drive Bargains upon the *Exchange*, to talk *Politicks* over a *News-Paper*, or to hold an impertinent *Chat* in gossiping Company about Cloaths, and Fashions, and the little Affairs and Transactions of the Neighbourhood. Among all the Creatures under Heaven, Man is the only one, that has
Religion,

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Religion, and the only one too, that has *Speech*; which is no obscure Intimation, that the one was designed to be subservient to the other. For what shall a Man talk of? What Subject is there worthy his Discourse, if not that, which is at once both the Perfection and Distinction of his Nature? If not that, wherein the Glory of God, as well as the Fate of his own and his Brother's Soul, is so nearly concerned? And yet, alas! if we look into the World, we shall find nothing less talked of than Religion. Wicked Men cannot, and good Men, for Fear of being accounted *singular*, will not make it the Subject of their Discourse; so that, what through the Indisposition of the one, and the Incapacity of the other, a Man may make Visit after Visit, go from House to House, out of one Company into another, for, it may be, a *Twelve-Month* together, and not hear one Word of Religion pass. It is no Wonder indeed, if wicked Men prefer the light Flashes of a wanton Mirth, which, for a while, suspend *Reflection*, and hide the Sinner from himself, to such Discourses, as awaken Conscience, and *prophecy* no Good concerning them, but only Evil continually; or, if Men of Virtue are, at any Time, guilty of so much *Weakness*, as to appear displeased with a serious and instructive Conversation, it cannot proceed from an Aversion to the Argument, because it is impossible that they should really be offended with such Subjects, as are the great Entertainment of their Retirement; but it is the Uneasiness they perceive in the Company, and Want of Courage to *oppose* so corrupt a Custom, that makes them behave in this Manner; whereas, had they Resolution enough to attempt it, these foolish Discouragements would soon be removed. Would good Men, I say, with the Liberty of an honest Zeal, oppose and remove all profane and immodest Freedoms in Conversation,

and study to promote and encourage the contrary, Veneration and Respect would attend them, and Religion would soon improve itself into a *Fashion*. The *Libertine* would retire to the *Stews*, and *Profaneness* be confined to the *Brothel*; Joy, and Peace, and Esteem would bless the *Dwellings of the Righteous*, and the Purity and Holiness of their Conversation here would fit and prepare them for that *Assembly of the First-born*, where, (instead of the present Impertinencies of Society) the Excellency of the Divine Being and Perfections, the Order and Wisdom, the Justice and Goodness of his Government, the Reasonableness and Equity of his Laws, the Pleasantness and Freedom of his Service, and the great Instances of his Love, especially that amazing one, in the *Redemption* of the World by the Passion of his Son, shall be the eternal Theme, whereof we shall then discourse with all mutual Freedom and Endearments, without Reserve, without Passion, without Affectation, or any of those little Designs and Artifices, which now both disguise and disrelish Conversation.

II. The other sore *Misery*, which affects the Soul, is *Obstinacy of Will*, in wicked and pernicious Courses. For what a deplorable Sight is this, to see a wretched Soul, madly pursuing its own Destruction, and forcing, as it were, its Way into Hell, through all the Resistances of its Religion, its Reason and Conscience together? Were we to see a Madman break loose from his Chains, and run his Head again a Wall; or, catching up a Dagger, thrust it into his own Breast, and repeat Stab after Stab, in Despite of all our Counsels and Dissuaves; should we not pity and lament his Case, and endeavour to restrain him from such violent Outrages against himself? And is it not a much more lamentable *Spectacle*, to see a wild and desperate Soul break loose from those Ties of Religion

gion and Conscience, which bind it to its Duty and Happiness, and, in a deaf and obstinate Rage, seize on the *Weapons* of Perdition, (for such all Wickedness is) plunge them into its own Bowels, and, with repeated Acts of Iniquity, imbrue its Hands in its own Blood; whilst the blessed Spirit, together with its own natural Sense of God, is struggling with it, and endeavouring in vain to disarm its desperate Fury? What merciful Heart would not be tempted to interpose, in order to restrain it by Reproof, and bind it down with good Counsel and Admonition? Now this is the proper Act of Mercy in the Case before us: When we see an obstinate Sinner resolutely pursuing his own Destruction, we should endeavour, by prudent and seasonable Reproofs, and by pious and compassionate Admonitions, to reclaim him *from the Error of his Way*.

There are some Offices of Humanity, which those, who had no other Light, but that of natural Reason, to guide their Actions, thought themselves obliged to perform, not only to their *Familiars*, but *Strangers*, not only to their Friends, but to their Enemies. To shew the Way to Travellers, who had lost it; to warn Persons in Danger of a Rock, or of a Precipice; to permit others to light their *Lamp* by ours, are particularly specified as Benefits, which, being useful to those, that receive them, and no Ways prejudicial to those, that give them, are to be denied to none. Now can we think ourselves bound by the Laws of Humanity to those common Instances of Kindness, and can we pretend to be exempt from others of much more Importance? Does common *Humanity* oblige us to put misguided Travellers into their right Way; and will not *Christianity* prevail with us to call back those wandering Souls, which have strayed from the *narrow Paths, which lead*
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unto Life, into the more wide and beaten Way, which leads to Destruction? Are we so careful to rescue an unwary *Voyager* from the Danger of striking on a Rock, and have we no Compassion on those, who, without our Interposal, are in immediate Hazard of making *Shipwreck* of a good Conscience? Do we cry out, when a Stranger is running upon a Precipice, and are we silent, when our Brother is falling into the bottomless Pit? Should we think it an Instance of Surliness and Barbarity, to deny another to borrow Light from our Light, and is there no Cruelty in withholding from them, *who sit in Darkness, and in the Shadow of Death*, that Light, which would not shine with less Lustre to us, by guiding their Feet likewise in the Way of Peace?

The Law of *Moses* gives us this Injunction; *Thou shalt not see thy Brother's Ox or his Ass go astray, and hide thyself from them: Thou shalt in any Case bring them again to thy Brother. Thou shalt not see thy Brother's Ass or his Ox fall down by the Way, and hide thyself from them; thou shalt surely help him to lift them up again.* And may we not apply to this Case what *St Paul* saith in another? *Doth God take Care for Oxen? Or saith he it altogether for our Sakes? For our Sakes no Doubt it is written, that those, who, by the Laws of Charity, are obliged to bring back a strayed Sheep, and to lift up a fallen Ox that belongs to their Brother, should think themselves much more obliged by the same Law to bring back their Brother himself, when gone astray; and to lift him up, when fallen into the Pit of Destruction.* But it is not only in Parables that this Duty is delivered to us; the Scripture says expressly, *Thou shalt not hate thy Brother in thine Heart, thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy Neighbour, and not suffer Sin upon him; where, in the Eye of the Mosaic Law, not to rebuke our*
 Brother

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Brother is to hate him, and *he that hateth his Brother, in the Eye of the Christian Law, is in Dark-ness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that Dark-ness hath blinded his Eyes.* If therefore the not rebuking our Brother is Hatred of him, as *Moses* affirms; and if the Hatred of our Brother is a Sign of Infidelity, as *St John* asserts; then does the Duty of reproving our Brethren stand upon as firm Ground as any other in the Word of God. *The Law, which was given by Moses, required it of those that lived under that Dispensation; and the Grace and Truth, which came by Jesus Christ, has enforced it upon all Christians, directing us, that we should exhort one another daily, while it is called To-day, lest any of us should be hardened through the Deceitfulness of Sin:* And, to prevail with us to set about so good and charitable a Work, this is the great and blessed Encouragement which *St James* has left us; *Brethren, if any of you err from the Truth, and one convert him, let him know, that he, who converteth a Sinner from the Error of his Way, shall save a Soul from Death, and shall hide a Multitude of Sins.* But whose Sins they are, that by this Means are hid, is a Point, wherein Expositors are not so well agreed.

Grotius, indeed, is of Opinion, that they are the Sins of the converted Person, which, upon his Repentance and Reformation, (wherein his Brother's Zeal for his Soul was, under God, a great Instrument) are all pardoned and forgiven, be they never so numerous and many; but the more obvious and easy Sense of the Words, as well as the plain Design of the Apostle, seems to refer to the Person converting. The Apostle's Design was, to shut up his Epistle with recommending to all Christians one of the most important and useful Duties, that of endeavouring the Conversion and Reformation of Men; and he intended likewise

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to stir them up to the Practice of this Virtue, by the most powerful Motives, that he could propose : And what are these ? Why *first*, that *he, who converteth a Sinner from the Error of his Ways,* should *first* consider, that he *saved a Soul from Death* ; and then *secondly*, and chiefly, *that he shall also cover a Multitude of Sins* : But whose Sins ? Those of the converted Person ? No. That was already said, and much more than that, in the foregoing Motive, *he shall save a Soul from Death* ; for surely the saving a Soul from Death necessarily includes and presupposes the Remission of its Sins. So that the Passage must be meant of *his Sins*, who *makes*, and not of *his*, who *becomes* the Convert ; and thus, indeed, the last Clause carries a new Motive in it, distinct from that of the former, and such an one, as rises higher, and more sensibly touches those, to whom it is addressed. “ Let such “ an one know, (for this may be a proper *Paraphrase* upon the Apostle’s Words) that he shall, “ by this Means, not only save a Soul from Death, “ though this itself be a very great and desirable “ Thing, but what more nearly concerns him, “ shall also secure to himself, on this Account, the “ Pardon of many Sins ;” not gross and heinous Sins (the Words of the Apostle do not imply that, neither can a Christian, zealous for the Conversion of others, be supposed to be guilty of such) but only many *lesser* Neglects and Failings in his Duty ; many Sins of *Infirmity, Surprise, and daily Incurision*, which, God knows, in the best of Men are too frequent, and therefore properly enough stiled, *a Multitude of Sins*.

After this, I need not urge the Practice of our Saviour and his Apostles, and what mighty Pains and Hazards the primitive *Christians* underwent, that they might bring Mankind to the *Knowledge of the Truth*, and rescue their Souls from the Snares of
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the Devil. If there be Joy in Heaven, over one Sinner, that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just Persons, which need no Repentance; think, O think, with what Joy and holy Triumph must that Man appear, at the Day of Judgment, when, in the full Assembly of Saints and Angels, it shall be reported and proclaimed aloud, that his Teaching and Instruction, his Counsel and Advice, his Admonition and Reproofs gave the first Turn to such an one's Conversion and Amendment, and was, under God, instrumental to the Salvation of his Soul, and the Joy and Rejoicing, which thereupon appeared in Heaven! How must his Countenance shine, and his Heart cheer him, when, after such Commendation, the Eyes of Men and Angels shall be turned upon him in full Applause and Admiration!

This one Consideration, I think, is enough to excite us all, by every proper Means, to endeavour the Instruction and Reformation of the most Ignorant and Mistaken, the most Profligate and Perverse. But if, after all, as it too often happens, the one will not receive our Instruction, nor the other endure our Reproof; yet, even then, pitying and praying for them becomes our Duty, and the worse we find their Condition, and the more intractable their Dispositions, the more vehemently must we strive with God in their Behalf, that he would soften their Hearts, and shew them their Errors, and bring them, first, to a teachable Temper, and, then, into the *Ways of Holiness and Truth.*

SECT.

SECT. V.

Of Mercy to Mens Bodies.

THE Miseries, which affect Mens Bodies, are either *natural* Blemishes and Defects, accidental Sickness and Diseases, outward Force and Violence, or Want and Scarcity of the common Necessaries of Life, about which the Offices of Mercy and Compassion are differently conversant.

1. All *natural Blemishes and Defects*, such as Lameness, Crookedness, Want of Senses, or Disproportion of Parts, are real Infelicities, that render our Bodies either less useful to ourselves, or less graceful and amiable to others : And, therefore, in this Case, the Law of Mercy requires us, not to contemn or undervalue Men, not to upbraid or reproach them upon that Score ; but to overlook these Blemishes as inconsiderable, which they could not prevent, and which they cannot rectify : To remember, that the Body is not the Man, but the *immortal* Mind, that inhabits it ; that the richest Diamonds wear, many Times, the roughest Coats ; and that, since it was not in their Power to order Nature in their own Composition, to deride or expose them for any Mishap or Deformity therein, is like flinging Salt into their Wounds, and turning that into a Triumph of Mirth and Drollery, which is properly an Object of Pity and Compassion.

2. *Sickness and Diseases* are sore Miseries, such as waste the Strength of Nature, rebate the Vigour of the Spirits, and make the whole Body, through incessant Pains and Weakness, not only useless, but burthensome to the Soul : In which Case the Laws of Mercy require us (provided our Company will be acceptable) to visit the Afflicted

very frequently, in order to cheer their drooping Spirits with the Liveliness of our Conversation, and to administer to their wearied Thoughts the Supports and Comforts of Religion: To contribute what we can to their bodily Ease and Refreshment; to be ready to serve them in all their Necessities; to compassionate their Grievs; to bear with their Peevishnesses; and, if they are poor and indigent, to supply them with all such Remedies, as are necessary to their Health and Recovery. But, above all, to take all fair Opportunities to awaken in their Minds serious Thoughts and Purposes; to prepare their Souls for an happy Death, and a glorious Eternity; and, to this End, to become their Advocates at the Throne of Grace, that the God of all Power and Goodness, *in whose Hands are the Issues of Life and Death*, would commiserate their Sorrows, and refresh their Weariness, and either remove their Sickness, or sanctify it to their eternal Health.

3. Outward Force and Violence, such as *Captivity* and *Imprisonment*, are great and comprehensive Miseries, which draw a long and heavy Chain of Calamities after them. When Mens Persons are exposed to the Will and Tyranny of their Enemies, and especially, when they are exasperated against them upon the Account of Religion, what can be expected but cruel and barbarous Usage; but to be worn out with Stripes, and Hunger, and intolerable Labour; and to be forced to pine away their wretched Lives in unpitied Anguish and Vexation of Soul? In which Case Mercy obliges us, when any fair Opportunity is proposed to us, to contribute to their Ransom proportionably to our Ability, and to solicit their Cause both with God and Men; to beseech him to support and preserve them, and to persuade all those, with whom we have an Interest, to extend their Liberality towards

wards their *Redemption*. And so, in the Case of *Imprisonment*, which, indeed, is but another Sort of Captivity, if they are our Friends and Acquaintance, Mercy requires us to visit them in their sad Solitude and Confinement, in order to divert their Sorrows, and raise and strengthen their Hopes by our Conversation ; to endeavour to mollify their Adversaries ; if they are insolvent, to compound their Debts ; and, if it be just and feasible, to contribute, according to our Power, to their Release and Enlargement ; for this is fulfilling the Christian Precept, of *remembering them, that are in Bonds, as being bound with them, and those which suffer Adversity, as being ourselves also in the Body.*

4. Want of the outward Necessaries of Life is a very sore Misery, and what Mercy requires us, not only to commiserate, but to relieve ; and relieve in Proportion to our Abilities, and the Necessities of the Persons that are in Want. But because Mercy and Bounty to the Poor is a Duty of great Moment, and general Concern, we shall consider it a little more distinctly : 1. As to the Reasonableness and Excellence : 2. The Manner and Measure : And, 3. The Motives and Inducements of our performing it.

I. That God has *implanted* in our Nature, and woven, as it were, into the very Frame of our Being, an *Inclination* to Acts of Tenderness and Compassion, insomuch, that a Man must divest himself of Humanity, before he can resist such Calls and Importunities, is what we were led to observe in our general Consideration of the Duty of Mercy. Now the true Reason, why this Passion of Pity was born with us, and made a Part of our Constitution, is, that thereby we might be excited and stirred up to help and succour all, that are in Necessity and Distress. Our Bowels do therefore naturally yearn at all miserable Objects,

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and we cannot help, unless we would deface the first and most genuine Impressions of God upon our Souls; we cannot help, I say, *feeling within* somewhat answerable, and *a-kin* to all the Misery, that we feel *without*; and, consequently, we ease our own Bowels, when we compassionate the Miseries, and relieve ourselves, when we remove the Afflictions of a Brother. Thus God and Nature within us solicit the poor Man's Cause: Our own Ease and Satisfaction demand from us Pity and Compassion; and the tender Relentings and Stirrings of Humanity, which arise in every Man's Breast, do even *mechanically* incline us to Acts of Mercy and Benevolence, if we will but stand *neutral*, and leave Nature to her own Workings.

But, besides the Propensity of Nature, there is a farther Obligation to this Duty arising from the near *Relation*, which every Man has to the very meanest and most abject, the poorest and most miserable of his own Kind. We are all the Workmanship of the same Hands, made of the same Matter, moulded in the same Form, and copied from the same Image, even that of God himself: For, *did not he, that made me*, says holy Job, *make him?* And *did not one fashion us in the Womb?* And as one Hand made us both, so has it made us so very near the *same*, that, in the main essential Ingredients of our Nature, we are all *one*; and therefore, in using him well, I am kind to myself, and, in feeding and supporting him, I sustain and cherish a Member of my own Body: Whereas to deny Bread to the Hungry, Lodging to the Traveller, and Covering to the Naked, &c. (in the strong and elegant Expression of the Prophet) is *hiding a Man's Self from his own Flesh*; nay, in the Phrase of the wise Man, 'tis something more unnatural; for, while the merciful Man does Good to his own Soul, saith he, *he that is cruel, troubleth his own Flesh.*

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But, how strictly soever we are obliged to this Duty by the Ties of Nature, yet there is still a more forcible Obligation upon us from our *spiritual* Relation and Consanguinity, as we are the Children of the same Father, born to the same Hopes, and *Co-heirs* of the same Inheritance in Light. For, is it not fit, that they should partake of the Bowels of Man's Compassion, who communicate with us in the everlasting Mercies of God? Who are endued with the gracious Influences of the same Spirit, and have the Image of the same God, not only by *Nature* stamped upon them, but by *Grace* renewed within them? Who are Partakers of the same high Calling, the same honourable Privileges, the same glorious Promises, and, in short, have been purchased and purified by the precious Blood of the same common Saviour? Since in these great and inestimable Benefits we all communicate alike, why should the secular Trifles of Wealth and Riches be made so private and particular? Especially considering, that, as we are designed for a better and celestial Country, we are but *Pilgrims* upon Earth, where, though the greatest may appear with a more costly *Equipage*, and more splendid *Retinue*, yet still he is but a *Passenger*, taking a Journey to the same Country, where the meanest Person, that sets out with him, may perhaps be as great as he. And is it not then extremely foolish and ridiculous, as well as barbarous and inhuman, for one in an opulent Condition to deny so poor a Sum, as would *defray* the necessary Expences of a *Fellow-Traveller*, who, at his Journey's End, and in his own Country, (which from any of us is not far distant) has as great, perhaps a greater Estate; as good, perhaps better Friend and Ally, than himself?

Thus it appears, from the several *Relations* we bear to each other, whether as Men or Christians,

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that this great Act of Religion, the relieving the Poor, is a most reasonable Service: And therefore we need less wonder, that we find *Moses* and the Prophets, in the *Old*, and, in the *New Testament*, our blessed Lord and his Apostles, inculcating nothing so often, urging nothing so pressingly, recommending nothing so affectionately, as this. The Law was a Dispensation of Servility and Fear, and had no great Power to excite and improve the tender Resentments of Nature; and yet we find God inserting this Precept in the very Body of it: *If there be among you a poor Man, thou shalt not harden thy Heart, nor shut thine Hand from thy poor Brother; thou shalt surely give him, because that for this Thing the Lord thy God will bless thee in all thy Works.* *Job* in his own Practice and Example has shewn us, that Persons of large Fortunes should not hold the Poor from their Desire, nor cause the Eyes of the Widow to fail; should not eat their Morsels alone, and the Fatherless not eat thereof; should not see any perish without Cloathing, or the Poor without a Covering; but order their Bounty so, that, being warmed with the Fleece of their Sheep, his Loins should bless him. The Royal Psalmist calls upon us to consider the Poor, and to disperse our Riches abroad, that the Lord may deliver us in the Time of Trouble. The Royal Preacher exhorteth us to cast our Bread upon the Waters, in order to find it after many Days; and for this, in another Place, he gives us this Encouragement, *he that hath Pity on the Poor, lendeth to the Lord; and that which he hath given him, will he pay him again:* And, to mention no more, the Prophet *Micah* hath made it one of the three great Articles in the System of Religion, *to love Mercy*; or as another Prophet hath explained it, *that thou deal thy Bread to the Hungry, and bring the Poor, that are cast out, to thine House; when thou seest the Naked, that thou*
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cover him, and that thou hide not thyself from thine own Flesh.

Well therefore may we expect, that, in a Religion designed to cultivate the tender Sentiments of human Nature, our Instructions should be, *not to lay up to ourselves Treasures upon Earth, but to be rich in good Works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate ; to abound in the Grace of Liberality ; to give to every one that asketh ; and, if we would be perfect, to sell all that we have, and give to the Poor, that so we may have Treasure in Heaven.* This is that pure Religion, and undefiled before God ; this that Sacrifice, wherewith he is well pleased ; this is the Method of expressing our Love to our gracious Lord, and making him our Debtor ; for verily I say unto you, in as much as ye have done it to one of the least of these my Brethren, ye have done it unto me. What a gracious Sentence is this ? *Can a Man be profitable to God ? As Job asks the Question : And as Elihu ; if thou be righteous, what dost thou give him ? Or, what does he receive at thy Hands ?* Alas ! my Goodness extendeth not to thee, is the Confession of the Man after God's own Heart : Yet see here the infinite Condescension of our Saviour ! He has found out a Way, how we may give somewhat even to him, that is already Lord of all ; be merciful to the Fountain of all Mercy, and do Good even to Goodness itself ; in that he places to his own Account, and graciously accepts, as done to himself, whatever we do to his afflicted Members for his Sake : And for this Reason he hath ordained, that, since himself was to return to his heavenly Father, we should have the Poor always with us, that, whenever we will, we may do them good. Them he hath left his Representatives, that we might never want whereupon to exercise our Love to him, even to the End of the World : And it is by Means of their Poverty, that we may make

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our Riches truly Blessings, as they afford us an Opportunity of employing them to the best of Purposes, and of setting forth the Honour and Love, which we always owe, and ought always to be paying to our Lord.

'Tis from no Defect then, or Failing of the inexhaustible Stores of God's Goodness, that there is such a Thing as *Poverty* among the Sons of Men. Had it been as agreeable to his infinite Wisdom, as it was easy to his Almighty Power, he might have made the same Abundance and Plenty common to all Mankind, and left no Room for the foolish Cavils against Providence, from the present unequal Distribution of the good Things of this World: Or, since it had pleased God to make the World consist, as it does, of rich and poor, he, who, through the whole Scripture, declares such a tender Regard for the Poor, might supply their Necessities with his own Hand. He, that fed the *Israelites* in a barren Wilderness with *Angel's Food*, and Bread sent from Heaven, and preserved their Garments from wearing out, or waxing old; he, that fed his Prophet by *Ravens*, and blessed the poor Widow's Handful of Meal and Cruise of Oil, so that it neither wasted nor failed; could still, (if he saw it good) without calling in the Help of the Rich, relieve all the Wants of his Creatures himself, but therefore he chuses to wave his Almighty Power, and to send Man to Man for Relief and Support, not only that he might make Trial of our Faith and Affection to him, but that he might endear us likewise to each other, and diffuse continually through the whole *intelligent* Creation a divine Principle of mutual Love. As then the Poor are the Representatives of Christ in his weak and suffering *Humanity*, so the charitable Rich, who feed and sustain them, may be said to represent him in his powerful and all-sufficient

cient Divinity. They supply the Place of an extraordinary Providence : They are instead of God to their indigent Brethren ; and, if they take Care to give every one *his Portion of Meat in due Season*, their Reward shall be commensurate to their Talents. And so we proceed to the Consideration,

II. Of some of the Methods and Measures of performing this Duty. *When thou dost thine Alms*, says our Blessed Lord, *do not sound a Trumpet before thee, as the Hypocrites do, in the Synagogues and in the Streets, that they may have Glory of Men ; but, when thou dost Alms, let not thy Left-Hand know what thy Right-Hand doth, that thine Alms may be in secret.* And, indeed, he that relieves the Necessities of others out of a virtuous Principle, out of Gratitude to God and a tender Compassion for human Nature in Distress, as he will esteem the divine Approbation more than all the Applauses of Men, so will he be very tender of making his Bounty a *Reproach*, or exposing the Poverty he relieves, by divulging his Charity ; and will therefore give it *secretly and privately*. He will consider, that, as God has made him a *Steward* and Dispenser of his Bounty to the Poor, after his own Conveniencies, and those that depend on him are served, the Remainder belongs to them ; and, in stating this Account, he will not extend his Conveniencies beyond their just Dimensions, but abate what he decently can of his superfluous Expences, and of that needless Pomp and Ceremony, which his Station and Character require not, and will thereupon give *liberally and bountifully*. He will be thankful to God for the kind Distinction of his Providence, for having made *his Cup to overflow*, and given him *Lands which he laboured not, and Vine-yards and Olive-yards, which he planted not*, whilst others remain in Poverty and Want. He sees their Wants press them hard, and that, the longer he delays their Relief, the longer

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longer he continues their Grievs and Miseries upon them, and therefore he gives *readily* and *cheerfully*. He considers his own Mortality, and the Uncertainty of human Affairs, whereby he may be deprived of the Opportunity of doing the Good he designs; and, being not so well satisfied that *posthumous* Deeds of this Kind will please the *living* God, he watches all Occasions, such as Times of Sickness, Scarceness of Work, Dearness of Provision, &c. when Mens Wants and Necessities call loud-est for Relief; and thus he gives *timely* and *seasonably*. And, lastly, because the Number of miserable People is too great for one to relieve, he considers where the greatest Necessities and the greatest Obligations are; and, consequently, gives the Preference to Christians before Heathens; to those of his own before those of a different Family and Communion; to good Men rather than to the Wicked; to those whom Sickness, real Misfortunes, or Oppression hath made Objects of Charity, rather than to those whom Idleness and Luxury hath reduced to Misery and Want.

These are the *Conditions*, that make the *Sacrifice* of Alms both grateful to the Receiver and acceptable to God. But, besides the Duty of *Almsgiving*, there are several others, such as assisting the Oppressed, releasing the Insolvent, and lending freely, and without Usury, upon some Occasions, that are included in our *Mercy to the Poor*, and are very proper and significant Expressions of it. Our *assisting the Oppressed* is enjoined by *Solomon*, in these Words: *If thou forbear to deliver them who are drawn unto Death, and those that are ready to be slain*; and so of any other Injury or Oppression occasioned by the Violence of lawless Men, *if thou sayest, behold we know it not*, excusing an uncompassionate Carelessness by a pretended Ignorance,

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doth not he that pondereth the Heart consider it? And he that keepeth thy Soul, doth not he know it? And shall not he render to every Man according to his Works? Our releasing the Insolvent from their Debt or Confinement, is what our Blessed Saviour has sufficiently intimated in the Parable of the *unmerciful Servant*, who, when his Lord had frankly remitted him a Debt, which he was by no Means capable of paying, laid hold on his poor *Fellow-Servant* for a trifling Sum; and, notwithstanding his Submissions and Intreaties, hurried him to Prison, for which he is reproached by his Lord; *O thou wicked Servant, I forgave thee all that Debt, because thou desiredst me; shouldst thou not also have had Compassion on thy Fellow-Servant, even as I had Pity on thee?* Our lending freely, and without Usury, is an Injunction likewise of our Saviour's; for, *love your Enemies, says he, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again, and your Reward shall be great.* But, because some Disputes have risen among Divines, concerning the Matter of Usury, it may not be amiss, in this Place, to determine the Point, and settle its proper Limitations.

That the *Jews* were forbidden to lend to the Poor upon Usury is manifest from this one Passage, among many others; *If thy Brother be waxen poor, and fallen to decay with thee, take no Usury of him, nor Increase; but fear God, that thy Brother may live well with thee.* Nay, that the same Prohibition was extended to the Rich, as well as the Poor, so long as they were *Israelites*, is evident from that remarkable Passage in *Deuteronomy*: *Thou shalt not lend upon Usury to thy Brother; Usury of Money, Usury of Viſuals, Usury of any Thing that is lent upon Usury. Unto a Stranger thou mayest lend upon Usury, but unto thy Brother thou shalt not lend upon Usury, that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all that thou settest thine Hand unto.* We may observe, however,

ver, that there can be no *moral* and intrinsick Evil in Usury, because God allows them to require it of Strangers, though they were not to do it in any immoderate or excessive Manner, in which Sense we may understand that Prohibition so frequently repeated, *Thou shalt not vex a Stranger, nor oppress him; for ye were Strangers in the Land of Egypt.*

Now, the true Reason why the *Jews* were permitted to take Usury of *Strangers*, and not of their Brethren, is this, that their *Heathen* Neighbours, as is plain of *Tyre* and *Zidon*, were *Merchants*, that improved their Money by Trade, and therefore it was fit that they should pay a moderate Interest for it; but the *Jews*, maintaining no foreign Commerce with other Nations, had no Occasion to borrow Money but to supply their present Wants; and to take Advantage of the Necessities of the Poor, to increase their own Fortunes by increasing their Neighbour's Poverty, was against all the Laws of Goodness and Charity; and therefore this Usury, which was the only Usury known in those Days, is strictly forbidden. All other Kinds of Usury are introduced by Trade and Commerce: And though it is against Charity to lend upon Usury to Men, who borrow to supply their Wants, yet, if Men borrow to increase their Trade and Fortunes, there is Justice and Equity in it, that the *Lender* should make some Increase of his Money, as well as the *Borrower*: And, accordingly, our Blessed Saviour, in the Answer he gives to the Servant, who hid his Talent in a Napkin, seems to justify this Procedure: *Thou oughtest to have put my Money to the Exchangers, and then, at my Coming, I should have received mine own with Usury.*

The Sum of our Enquiry is this, — That though Usury is expressly prohibited under the *Jewish* Law, and comes sometimes in Company with many gross Enormities; yet having no *moral* Turpi-

Turpitude in it, and being not forbidden by the Gospel, being accounted *expedient* in Matters of Trade, and to many, that have no other Way of subsisting, absolutely *necessary* (whatever the *Jews*, who had no Opportunities of Trafficking with Money, might be required to do) in Countries, whose whole Wealth and Support depend upon Commerce, and the Produce of their Money, it can never justly be deemed an Iniquity to make a moderate Gain thereby, provided always, that such as are in Poverty and Necessity be not concerned. To these we must lend without Usury, nay, to these we must lend, *hoping for nothing again*: The plain Sense of which Precept is this, that where a Person, under the Pressure of great Necessity, shall come to us, and desire to borrow such a Sum of Money, as his pressing Circumstances require, provided we can spare it, and, if the Providence of God render the Person unable to repay us, we can dispense with the Loss of it, we ought not to refuse such a reasonable Charity as this, or be afraid of lending, because we run probably a Hazard of never being paid again; but, on the contrary, should freely and chearfully supply him, with a Resolution to lose it, if God never enables him to repay us. This is the Duty; and we come now,

III. To some of the Motives and Encouragements to it. And, to this Purpose, let it be considered, that, of all the good Things we do, there is none that gives that true Comfort and Delectation to the Mind, as a reasonable Refreshment to the Wretched and Necessitous. For, when I see a Man struggling with Want, and groaning under a heavy Burthen of Poverty, if I relieve him, I ease and refresh my own yearning Bowels; and the human Nature within me, which is common to us both, by a Kind of *Sympathetick Motion*, exalts and raises up itself, and swells with a generous

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rous Pleasure : I find an Ease of Mind, a Complacency of Spirit, and a secret irresistible Joy springing up in my Breast. All the Good, which I designed to shed abroad, and part with to my poor Brother, recoils back upon myself, and the Comfort I feel within, confirms me in the Truth of this Position of our Blessed Saviour, that *it is more blessed to give, than to receive.*

Men may pretend a Danger of exhausting their Substance by too liberal Contributions, but let us a little consult Experience. Who ever knew an Estate impaired by Charity ? By Love of our Brethren ? But by Love of ourselves, how many ? By Luxury, by Prodigality, by the Love of the World, by the very Desire of increasing and multiplying, how many ? These are the *Wings*, that *Riches* most usually take to themselves, when they fly away ; and then, as the wise Man speaks, *what Profit hath he, that laboureth for the Wind ?* The best and securest Way then, to fix these uncertain and fleeting Things, is to lay them up where it is impossible they should be lost.

What we give to the Poor is laid up in Heaven, where no *Thief* can enter, and where no *Moth* or *Rust* doth abide ; and, therefore, in Despite of all the Fortune, all the Might, all the Malice of the World, the liberal Man will ever be rich, who has God's Providence for his *Estate*, God's Power for his *Defence*, God's Favour for his Reward, and God's Promise for his Assurance, *that he who giveth to the Poor, shall not lack ; that the liberal Soul shall be made fat ; and that he who deviseth liberal Things, by liberal Things shall be stand.* Lay up thy *Treasure* therefore, says the wise Son of *Syrach*, according to the *Commandments* of the Most High, and it shall bring thee more Profit than Gold. *Riches, that are kept, profit not in the Day of Wrath ; but shut up Alms in thy Store-Houses, and they shall deliver thee from*

from all Affliction : Especially in the great and momentous Times of Death and Judgment, when, as the Royal Psalmist says, *Blessed is he that considereth the Poor, the Lord shall deliver him in Time of Trouble ; the Lord shall preserve him, and keep him alive, and he shall be blessed upon Earth ; the Lord shall strengthen him upon the Bed of Languishing, and make all his Bed in his Sicknefs* : And when, as our gracious Saviour says, *Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the Beginning of the World ; for I was an hungry, and ye gave me Meat ; thirsty, and ye gave me Drink ; naked, and ye clothed me ; sick, and ye visited me ; in Prison, and ye came unto me* : Or, at least, in as much as ye did it unto one of the least of these my Brethren, ye did it unto me ; and therefore come unto me, ye blessed of my Father.

CHAP. III.

Our Duty towards Ourselves ; and,

1. Of the Government of our Thoughts.

THE Duty, which we owe to ourselves, seems chiefly to consist in the right Ordering and Management of the two constituent Parts of our Nature, *Soul and Body*, i. e. in the Direction of our *Thoughts*, in the Submission of our *Wills*, in the Regulation of our *Passions*, in the Government of our *Tongues*, in the Subjection of our *Bodies*, and in the Renewal and Sanctification of our *whole Nature*.

I. *Keep thy Heart with all Diligence*, is the Advice of the wise Man, who, according to the current Opinion of the ancient Philosophy, taking the *Heart* for the chief Seat of the Soul, and the Instrument

of its most noble Operations, sets it to signify our inward *Thoughts* and *Affections*, which we are to *keep*, or attend to *with all Diligence*, because out of them *are the Issues*, i. e. the Fruits and Effects, which appear in our Lives and Conversations. Since the Goodness or Badness of our Lives then does altogether depend upon the good or bad Government of our Thoughts and Inclinations, it may not be improper, 1. To consider what Power God has given us over these inward Motions of our Minds; and, 2. Wherein the Art of governing them does consist.

That God has given us some Power over the Thoughts and Affections of our Minds, cannot be disputed: But then, because some People, by the very Principles of their Make and Constitution, as others, by long Usage and frequent Trials, are better qualified for this Government than others, and, according to several Contingencies of outward Things, have, at some Times, a greater Command over their Passions, than at others; it cannot be expected, that any particular Resolution should be answerable to all these Cases: And therefore all that we can do, must be to lay down some such general *Proposition*, as may comprehend most of them: And, to this Purpose, it seems very manifest,

1. That the first Motions of our Minds are very little, if at all, under our Power and Dominion. By the first Motions of our Mind, we mean those sudden Thoughts or Apprehensions, those involuntary Passions and Desires, which are excited in our Minds by any *Object*, that is, at that Time, presented to our Imaginations: And these we are not so much Masters of ourselves, as to be able to stop, even though they should chance to be irregular, because they are produced so very *quick*; they take Possession of the Mind, before the Mind is apprehensive

henfive of them, before the Judgment is awakened, and Reason alarmed to make a timely Interpofure. Thus, upon a great Provocation, a Man of a *passionate* Temper cannot avoid feeling a sudden Refentment of Anger; upon hearing himself commended, a Man, that defires to be well thought of, cannot but entertain fome Vanity of Imagination; and, when all the Temptations are fet before him, a Man, addicted to his Pleasures, can hardly prevent fome fecret irregular Inclinations towards them. He may indeed (as he ought to do) fupprefs thefe Irregularities, when he perceives them rifing in his Breast; and, by long Confideration, and a ferious Exercife of himfelf in the Ways of Godlinefs, make thofe, that were formerly Temptations to him, in Time become none at all: But, as for the firft Motions and Workings of his Mind, thefe he can no more prevent, than he can alter his Temper, or evade the Circumftances that do furround him; and therefore the *Art* of ruling his Thoughts does not lie here.

2. And as the firft Motions of our Minds are excepted from our Power and Jurifdiction, fo, from the Prefence of fome *outward* Object, the Violence of fome *inward* Paflion, or the Temper and Indifpofition of a Man's Body, it very frequently happens, that he lofes the free *Command* of his Thoughts, and *Fancies* and Imaginations are forced upon him, whether he will or no. When a Man, for Inftance, is under a fharpe tormenting Pain, as he cannot avoid feeling, fo neither can he forbear thinking of it: When he is full of Grief for the Lofs of fome dear Relation, or tranfported with Paflion for fome unworthy Treatment; until his Paflions cool, and the Impreffions, that caufed them, are abated, it is in vain to bid him forget thefe Grievances; for the Nature of Man is fuch, that, when it is once engaged in warm Thoughts

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about any Matter, it is very hard, if not impossible for it, to disengage itself on a sudden. The like is to be said, not only in all Sorts of Distempers, where the Brain is visibly disturbed, but even in the Case of some deeply *hypochondriac* Persons, who are often known to be haunted with a Set of Imaginations and Fancies, that destroy their inward Peace and Tranquillity of Mind, and yet such as they can, by no Means, get quit of, tho' they desire it never so impatiently; and therefore the *Art* of governing their Thoughts does not lie here neither.

Well: But if a Man be such a *Slave* to his Thoughts; if, from the Complexion of his Body, outward Objects, and inward Passions, Fancies and Imaginations are so obtruded upon him, that he cannot controul them, would he never so fain, the great Question is, wherein does this boasted Liberty of Thinking consist? And to this we answer,

3. That, excepting the Cases already mentioned, we have a Liberty of Thinking; which Liberty consists in bending our Thoughts, and applying our Minds more vigorously to one Kind of Object, than another. Thus, of the Multitude of Objects that occur to our Minds, it is in our Power to determine which of them we will dwell upon; and, when we have pitched upon any one, it is farther in our Power to determine how long, and in what Degree we will attend to it; whether we will pursue it with the utmost Vigour of our Minds, or with some Indifference and Remissness. In this, as we conceive it, consists the very Nature of our Freedom of Thinking; but then,

4. There is a farther Power we have over our Minds, more especially to be considered, because, in the good or ill Use of it, the very Foundation of all our Virtue or Vice is laid. We cannot, indeed,

deed, in many Cases, think always of what we would ; nay, we cannot oftentimes hinder Abundance of Thoughts from taking Possession of our Mind, whether we will or no ; but this we certainly can do : We can assent to our Thoughts, or deny our Assent to them ; when any Suggestion arises in our Minds, we can observe its Nature and Tendency, and accordingly cherish, or reject it. And here it is, that the *Morality* of our Thoughts begins ; according as we assent or dissent to the Motion that is made in our Minds, so will our Thoughts put on the Nature of *Virtue* or *Vice*.

When any Temptations are presented to us from without, we cannot, perhaps, on such Occasions, but feel an *irregular* Passion, or Inclination stirring within us ; but yet, at that very Time, it is in our Power, whether we will comply with these Passions and Inclinations or not ; whether we will consent to them or not ; whether we will pursue them any farther or not. Now, if we do not consent to them, but endeavour to stop, and stifle, and resist them, as soon as we are aware of them, there is no Harm done. Our Thoughts, how indecent and irregular soever they were, are rather to be accounted the *Infirmities* of our Nature, than any Sins of ours, properly so called. But then, on the other Side, if we consent to any wicked Motion or Inclination, that we feel in ourselves, (let it come in how it will, never so suddenly, never so unexpectedly) if we close with any Thought, that prompts us to Evil, so as to be pleased with it, to delight in it, and to think of pursuing it, 'till it be brought into Action ; in that Case, we are no longer to plead our *original Corruption* ; for, in that very Instant, we become *actual Sinners*, actual Transgressors of the Law of God, whose Obligation extends to our Hearts and Thoughts, as well as our outward Actions ; though it must be al-

lowed, we are not so great Transgressors, while our Sin continues in the Thought and Intention only, as when it proceeds to outward Action ; for this is the Gradation wherein the Apostle has described it ; *Every Man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own Lust, and enticed ; then, when Lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth Sin, and Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth Death.*

II. This I take to be the true Measure of that Power and Authority, which God has given us over our Thoughts : And from hence we may, 1. In the first Place, lay it down for a certain Rule, that the Way to secure the Government of them, is to be always upon our *Watch*, and attending to the first Motions and Workings of our Minds, that, whenever we find them tending to any Thing that is forbidden, we may stop and restrain them as soon as we can. We cannot indeed (as we said before) prevent irregular Passions and Desires from arising in our Minds upon sundry Occasions, but this we can do ; as soon as we are aware of them, we can refuse our Consent to them, (and, in that Case, it is to be hoped, they will not be imputed to us as Sins) nay, not only so, but we can restrain them from breaking out, or shewing themselves in our Words and Actions ; for the Motions of our outward *Members* are all at our Command, though the first Motions of our *Minds* be not. Here therefore will lie a great Point in the Art of governing our Thoughts. We cannot perhaps, for Instance, prevent a sudden Passion of Anger from rising in our Minds, upon sundry Occasions ; but, as soon as we feel this Passion, we can seal up our Mouths, so that it shall not vent itself in unseemly Words ; and, if we withdraw the Fewel from the new-kindled Fire, it will extinguish of itself ; whereas, if we suffer it to break out into bitter Speeches and Expressions, it will

will flame beyond Measure. The like is to be said of any impure Fancies or Desires, which may be excited in us occasionally. It was not perhaps in our Power to keep them from coming into our Minds, but it is in our Power to withdraw from the Temptation, that occasioned them, and to endeavour to direct our Thoughts to some other *Object*, or, at least, not to proceed one Step in any outward Action towards the Accomplishment of them; and if we take this Course, the Disturbance of our Minds will soon abate, and we return to our *ordinary* Tempers again.

2. If ever we desire to keep our Thoughts under due Regulation, there are two Things that we must have an especial Care to avoid, *Idleness* and *loose Company*; for both of these do strangely unhinge a Man's Mind, disarm it of that *Severity*, which is its best Defence against evil Thoughts, and expose it, as an easy Prey, to every Temptation that will attack it. Whatever therefore Mens Circumstances and Quality may be, some useful Way or other should be found out, whereby those many Hours, which, for Want of a settled Business, might otherwise be lost or mis-spent, may be expended *innocently* at least, if not *advantageously*. And, believe me, what vast Improvements in divers Parts of Knowledge might those Men make, who have Time at their Command, and may enjoy Privacy and Solitude, when, and as long as they please! This however would be the immediate Consequence: That, by keeping the Mind continually exercised and employed, it would not be at leisure to admit unlawful Thoughts into its Presence; whereas *Idleness*, and having nothing to do, is the Mother of those vain, unprofitable, and sinful Fancies, wherein some Men spend their Days. Temptations, alas! too frequently come in our Way, whether we will or no, but the *idle* Man is forced

to seek out Temptations for the *Shipwreck* of his Virtue ; and therefore no Wonder, if, in a World stored with Variety of such, as are suited to every one's Disposition, the Man, that seeks for them, finds Abundance ; and as he finds Abundance, so he is left naked and defenceless to every one that comes in his Way. *I went*, says Solomon, *by the Field of the Slothful, and by the Vineyard of the Man void of Understanding ; and lo ! it was all grown over with Thorns, and Nettles had covered the Face thereof* : For, though the Words may be explained in a literal Sense, yet, as it is usual for the inspired Penmen to describe *heavenly* and *spiritual* Things by sensible Representations ; so there is no Question, but that Solomon had a farther and more noble Design in these Words : Namely, to shew us, that there is nothing more apt to choak and destroy the *good Seed* of Religion, or to contribute to the Growth of all Manner of Sin and Impiety, than an Habit of Idleness.

Corrupt Conversation, the other Thing we mentioned, ought to be particularly guarded against. For it enervates a Man's Mind, and takes off the Edge and Vigour of it. And he who is so unhappy as to listen to it, will, perhaps too late, find the Truth of the Apostle's Assertion, that *evil Communications corrupt good Manners*.

3. If ever we intend to order our Thoughts to good Purposes, above all Things we must be mindful to make that the Business of our Lives, which is indeed our greatest *Concern*, and ought therefore to be our *principal* Design. What that is, we need no Detail of Arguments to prove, since it is evident to every one, who believes he has an immortal Soul to save, that the greatest Concern of all is to approve himself to God, who made him, who disposes of all his Affairs, and who, accordingly as he endeavours, or not endeavours to serve him, will
make

make him inconceivably happy, or miserable to all Eternity. Now, if we be so wise as really to propose the Service of God, and the Salvation of our Souls, as our main End, and resolve to mind and follow it accordingly, we have made a very considerable Step towards the obtaining a Security to ourselves, that the greatest Part of our Thoughts and Affections will be *such*, as are acceptable to God, and ought to be satisfactory to ourselves. For since our Natures are so contrived, that they must always be thinking on something or other, and yet are so contrived withal, that we think most on that, which is most in our Esteem and Pursuit; whatever it is that we make our *main Business*, or place our chief Delight in, upon That will our Thoughts run, upon That will our Desires, our Inclinations, our Affections be fixed. The Man, for Instance, that has set his Heart on Money, and makes it the great Business of Life to become rich, finds it so far from being difficult to keep his Mind steady to his *main Interest*, as he calls it, that the Difficulty lies in thinking of any other Matter. The Man, that is given up to Pleasure and Debauch, puts no Force or Violence upon himself, in thinking and contriving, all the Day long, how he may bring to pass the Gratifications of his Lusts and Appetites. Did we but then make the Service of God, and the Attainment of Heaven and Happiness, as much our Business, our End, our Design, as these Men make Wealth and Pleasures to be theirs, we should certainly be thus affected: The common Course of our Thoughts would naturally and easily, without the least Constraint or Violence, run upon these Objects. We cannot suppose, that there are Charms in worldly and sensual Things to attract a Man's Mind, and to bind down the Thoughts as it were with Fetters, and not allow, that there are the same, or much

greater in Virtue and Goodness ; in the Love and Favour of God ; in a pure Conscience here, and eternal Happiness hereafter.

4. Another excellent Rule for the good Government of our Thoughts is, that we should live under a constant Sense of God's Presence and Inspection over us. It is impossible to enumerate the several ridiculous Fancies, wherewith the Imagination amuses itself ; yet we please ourselves, that, whatever the inward State and Disorder of our Minds may be, those, we converse with, know nothing of the Matter. And indeed it is wisely designed by Providence, that we cannot see one another's Thoughts ; for if, notwithstanding all the Arts of *Hypocrisy* and *Disimulation*, Men cannot, on several Occasions, forbear to render themselves distasteful and offensive ; how intolerable would they appear to one another, if all their vain and aspiring, all their envious and revengeful, all their covetous and carnal Thoughts lay open without Disguise ? But in the mean time, that we are so careful, not only to hide our secret criminal Inclinations, but to put on the false Colours of Virtue, *be that made the Eye, shall not be see ? And, if he do see, shall not be punish ? Hell and Destruction are before the Lord, how much more then the Hearts of the Children of Men ?*

These are some of the Rules, that are generally prescribed for the good Government of our Thoughts : And, to give them a greater Power and Efficacy, there are some particular Exercises, proper to be recommended on this Occasion ; such as reading the Holy Scriptures, and other good Books ; frequent Meditation on religious Subjects ; and, above all, devout and constant Prayer to God, that he would be pleased to send his Holy Spirit into our Souls, in order to illuminate our Understandings,

standings, and sanctify our Wills ; *to search us, and know our Hearts ; to try us, and know our Thoughts ; to see if there be any wicked Way in us, and to lead us into the Way everlasting.*

Of Religious Meditation.

UNDER the Government of our Thoughts, may very well be reduced the particular Act or Exercise of *Meditation*, which consists in a serious Consideration of Matters relating to Religion, that are discovered and set before us, to the End, that we may receive Advantage, by fixing our Thoughts upon them, and thereby becoming more pious and holy : And, in order to explain this Duty, we shall, 1. Observe, what are the proper Objects of it ; and then, 2. Endeavour to recommend it to Practice, by the Consideration of its Excellence and Usefulness.

I. Meditation is called by the Antients, *the Soul's conversing with itself* ; its contemplating its own Nature, and reflecting upon its own Actions ; and therefore the first Work, that it puts us upon, is to consider the inestimable Worth and Value of our immortal Spirits ; and what the great Business, for which they were sent into this World, is : To remember, that the State we are now in, is but a State of *Trial*, in order to another World, and that therefore it nearly concerns us to know, how we are provided for it : To weigh and consider, how frail, how uncertain our Life is, *a Vapour, that appears but a little*, and then is gone ; but that, after Death, most certainly comes Judgment : To represent to our Imaginations the dismal Scene of the last Day ; how impartial the Judge is, before whom we must appear ; and how severe the Inquisition will be into all our Actions : To ponder it in our Minds, that we shall then be consigned,
either

either to that perfect Bliss and Happiness, which are in the *Mansions* of Glory, or to that unspeakable Woe and Misery, which is the just Reward of the Impenitent, in the *Regions* of Darkness: And, because the Eternity of those two States is That, which makes the one so desirable, and the other so terrible, it will nearly concern us to be very frequent and serious in our Consideration of what it is to live for ever in the Presence of God, what *to live with everlasting Burnings.*

Thus our own Nature and Concerns afford us Matter worthy our Meditation, and much more than may we find it in the Nature and Attributes of God: In his *Omnipotence*, whereby he created the World at first, and continues to maintain it in its Being: In his *Omniscience*, whereby he not only takes Notice of all Events, but has a perfect Knowledge of them, before they come to pass: In his *Wisdom*, whereby he so governs and disposes of all Things, that they ultimately redound to his Glory, and the Good of Mankind: In his *Goodness*, whereby he shews himself kind to his Creatures: In his *Justice*, whereby he severely animadverts on those that transgress his Laws: In his *Immensity*, whereby he fills all Places, but is contained in none; and, in his *Immutability*, whereby he is always the same, without any *Variableness*, or *Shadow of Change.*

Thus the *Nature* of God gives Scope for our sublimest Thoughts, and most exalted Contemplations; and, in like Manner, his *Works*, whether of *Creation*, *Providence*, or *Redemption*, are the deserved Objects of our Meditation. “ Look up
“ to the Heavens, (was the Advice of some an-
“ cient Philosophers) and observe the Order, and
“ constant Course of the bright Luminaries,
“ placed there, because those illustrious Specta-
“ cles are visible Arguments, and shining Demon-
“ strations

“frations of the greater Glory of him, that made
“them.” Look down upon the Air, the Earth,
the Sea, and all the Things contained in them;
observe their admirable Frame and Composition,
and the excellent Ends and Uses for which they
were designed; nay, observe the Make and Con-
texture of the least and meanest Animals, that vast
Variety of their Kinds, and the wonderful Instinct
of their Natures; *how the Stork knoweth her appoint-
ed Time, and the Turtle, and the Crane, and the Swal-
low observe the Time of their Coming; and, by these
Things, that are made and visible, the invisible Things
of God, i. e. his eternal Power, and Wisdom, and
Goodness will be clearly seen and understood.*

From the Works of the *Creation*, we may pro-
ceed to those of *Providence*; and, for some Time,
dwell upon this comfortable Thought and Reflec-
tion, that, notwithstanding the strange Vicissitudes
and surprising Changes, that we may observe, God
rules among the Children of Men; that *the Eyes of all
wait upon him, and he giveth them their Meat in due
Season*; that *he openeth his Hand, and satisfieth the
Desire of every living Thing, filling their Hearts with
Food and Gladness*: For certainly this common and
large Provision, which is made for Mankind, may
justly entertain our Thoughts; and a pleasant Me-
ditation it needs must be to observe, how this great
Family of the World is, every Day, taken Care of,
and supplied.

From the Works of *Providence*, we may still ad-
vance to a nobler *Theme*, the Work of our *Redemp-
tion*; and here we shall find Occasion to cry out,
with the Apostle, *O the Depth of the Riches both of
the Wisdom and Knowledge of God!* When we con-
sider, how, by the wilful Apostacy of our first
Parents, we are all defiled with Sin, and thereby
made liable to the Divine Wrath; how our blessed
Saviour undertook to appease this Wrath, by re-
moving

moving our Pollution and Defilement first, then our Guilt and Obnoxiousness to Punishment, and so putting us in a State of Salvation and Happiness; how, to effect this, though, being the eternal Son of God, he vouchsafed to *cloath* himself with Flesh, and to assume our human Nature; to live a poor obscure Life, and suffer a painful and ignominious Death for our Sake, and in our Stead; how, by his infinite and irresistible Power, he rose from the Dead in a short Time, after that, ascended into Heaven, and thence sent down his Holy Spirit, to furnish his Church with all Gifts and Graces; and, lastly, how the Assistance of this Spirit, the Acceptance of our Prayers, the Favour of God, our Adoption, our Justification, and eternal Glory in the Mansions above, are all the blessed Fruits of this Redemption. These are the great and astonishing Things, which even the glorious *Angels desire to look into*; and much more then is it our Business and Employment to be thoroughly acquainted with them. And to this Purpose another Object of our Meditation is the *Word*, as well as the Works of God; for *there* we are entertained with those sublime *Doctrines*, those divine and heavenly Truths, which are not to be found in the Volumes of other Authors. There is *History*, the most ancient in the World, and on whose Authority we may entirely depend: There are *Precepts*, and Commands, and Rules of Life, such as none of the Masters of *Ethicks* could ever prescribe: There are *Promises*, to solace and refresh our Minds; there are *Menaces*, to curb our Appetites, and alarm our Fears; and there, in short, is every Thing, that deserves our Care and Contemplation.

Thus we have chalked out a Path for our religious Meditation, and come now to consider the great Excellency and Usefulness of this Exercise;

1. As

1. As it is a Preservative against Evil ; and, 2. An Incitement to all Manner of Good.

II. It is a severe Reflection upon human Nature, that, which the Prophet delivers from the Mouth of God, *the Ox knoweth his Owner, and the Ass his Master's Crib, but Israel does not know me* ; does not take Notice of God, does not observe his Laws, does not obey his Precepts : All his boasted Knowledge and Prerogative of Reason does him no Good ; does not make him so observant of his heavenly Master, as the Ox or the Ass are of their Feeders ; and the Reason of all follows, *my People will not consider* : For it is the Want of Consideration, more than Want of Knowledge, that is the great Spring of Men's Disorders. Few are so ignorant, as not to know, that Excess and Drunkenness are great and enormous Crimes, and yet they customarily run into these, because they will not entertain any deliberate Thoughts about the Matter. The common Swearer cannot but have heard, *that God will not hold that Person guiltless, who taketh his Name in vain* ; and yet what he has heard proves of no Use, for Want of a serious Consideration. The unclean Person has frequently been told, that *Whoremongers and Adulterers God will judge* ; and yet he continues in his Lewdness, because he gives himself no Time to ponder his Actions : Whereas, did but these several Sinners consider seriously, that, *at the Revelation of the righteous Judgment of God, he will pour out Indignation and Wrath, Tribulation and Anguish, upon every Soul of Man, that doth Evil* ; they durst no more stop a Thunderbolt, as it comes roaring from the Clouds, than run into these Perpetrations deliberately, and in cold Blood.

The Reasons of Sin are not so strong, as to carry us to the Commission of it, with a free and voluntary Consent ; but the Temptations to it are usually so sudden, that they hurry away our Passions, before

fore *Understanding* can bethink herself to lay hold on her Reins, and interpose her Authority. Now *Meditation* composes the Passions, and keeps the Mind steady, while she debates the Nature of the Action that is before her, and, accordingly, as she perceives its Quality is, takes the Resolution either of pursuing, or declining it.

But, besides the Precipitancy of our Passions, the Devil, we are told, is a great Instrument in prompting us to Wickedness: He is represented in the Parable, as *the Enemy*, that sows *Tares*, the Seeds of Evil in our Minds; but then his *Sed-Time*, we may observe, is, *while Men sleep*, i. e. while they neglect the Cultivation of their Souls, and are *thoughtless*: For, let Men once enter into sober Thoughts, and take *the Shield of Faith*, which is no more than the Contemplation of God's Threats and Promises, in Hand, and then they have wherewithal to *quench the fiery Darts of the Devil*. He that thinks *ill*, prevents the Tempter; he that thinks *nothing*, tempts him; but he that thinks *religiously*, defeats the Tempter, and is proof and secure against all his Assaults.

The Eagerness of Passion, heightened by the Instigations of Satan, (as we find in the Case of *David*) will sometimes betray a Man, that, in general, lives under this Guard, into the Commission of very heinous Offences; but then, his After-Reflections, and looking back seriously on what he has done, with the Help of divine Grace, will as certainly recover him: For to this the *Royal Penitent* imputes his Restoration; *I thought on my Ways, I turned my Feet unto thy Testimonies*; I considered well what I had done, and how I had behaved: I made a strict Enquiry into my past Life, and then I began to chide myself for my Folly, and to bewail my Forgetfulness of God and Heaven; and thus I immediately abandoned my former

mer Sins, and, as fast as I could, betook myself to an holy and religious Life; *I made Haste, and delayed not to keep thy Commandments.* And indeed, considering that Religion has *Pleasantness* in its *Ways*, as well as Glory in its End, whereas the Paths of the Wicked, beset with Briars and Thorns as they are, lead certainly at last *to the Pit of Destruction*: It can hardly be presumed, that Men of any competent Understanding should fly from the one, and pursue the other with the Vehemence we find they do, would they but now and then stop a little in their Career, breathe a while, and take Time to reflect on their Conduct, and what *will be the End thereof.*

As therefore we desire to stop up the Sources and Fountains of Sin, to restrain our immoderate Passions, and defeat the Temptations of our Enemy; to prevent the Accession and Allurements or Vice, or to recover ourselves to a State of Godliness, after we have unhappily fallen from it; we must learn the great Act of *communing with ourselves*; and, retiring from the Hurry and Business of the World, be every now and then putting such Questions as these to our Souls, *Dic anima, quo tendis, & in quod dirigis arcum?* “ Tell me, Soul, “ what art thou doing? At what Rate livest “ thou? And whither tends the Level of thy Ac- “ tions? Hast thou the Glory of God, and thy “ own Salvation in Prospect? Or else shootest “ thou at Rovers, and only *beatest the Air*? Life “ and Death are set before thee, which then of “ the two designest thou to chuse? Wilt thou “ pursue thy Sins any longer, or wilt thou betake “ thyself to a Course of Religion? On the Side “ of *Religion* there are Troubles indeed, that must “ be undergone; every complectional Sin, as “ dear as a *Right-Hand* or a *Right-Eye*, must be “ parted with, and some Rules of uneasy Pre- “ scription

“ scription submitted to : But then, in Balance of
 “ these, there is the Favour of God, the Joy of
 “ the Holy Ghost, Peace of Conscience, Satisfac-
 “ tion of Mind *here*, and an exceeding great
 “ Reward in Heaven, for all thy Labour. On
 “ the Side of *Vice*, there are Pleasures indeed, that
 “ the World much admires, and runs into ; but
 “ then they are attended with the Anger of God,
 “ the Sense of Guilt, Uneasiness of Conscience
 “ *here*, and terminate at last in a Punishment, not
 “ to be thought on without Horror. Here is the
 “ Option that is set before thee ; and therefore,
 “ if thou hast any Reflection left, any Desire of
 “ Happiness, *think on thy Ways, and turn thy Feet*
 “ *unto God's Testimonies.*”

2. The other Commendation of religious Meditation is, its great Tendency to the Promotion of good Actions, such as relate to the Practice of *Virtue*, as well as the Offices of *Devotion*. Virtue, we are sure, wants not its Beauty and Attractions, but then its Amiableness is not Matter of Sense : Its chief Benefits are distant and future, and the Advantages, whereby it endeavours to engage us, are such, as exist only in Contemplation. If therefore we neglect to bring Things distant home to us by Thinking ; if we neglect to confirm our Minds by the frequent Prospect of Eternity, and to sweeten the Uneasiness of present Things with the Expectation of those that are to succeed ; it is impossible but that Virtue should lose its Power and Attraction over us, and our Souls run loose to the Entertainment of any Pleasures, that more nearly beset us : It is impossible but that either Design, or Glory, or Unwillingness, or Uneasiness, or Regret should creep in, and fully the very Offices of our Devotion. Offices of this Kind, we know, are not acceptable to God for the *outward* Work, but only for the *Spirit* and Affection, with which

which they are performed ; for that warm Love and ardent Desire, whereof the Fire, that was *never to go out* upon the Altar of *Burnt-Sacrifice*, in the *Jewish* Temple, was a very significant Emblem. But now, where shall we get this Fire, or from whence shall we maintain it ? There is surely no such *Principle* to be found in our *natural* Temper, and it is Folly to expect it from mere *Infusion* : The freest Irradiations of Divine Grace will never kindle it in us, without the Use of proper Means, and these Means consist in entertaining good Thoughts and holy Meditations. While *I was musing*, says the Psalmist, *the Fire kindled* ; for it is Musing, Thinking, Meditation, that, like a Burning-Glass, will gather together, and amass the scattered *Beams* of Divine Bounty, which are always round about us, and, darting them into our Soul, will warm our Affections, and kindle the Fire there ; which *Beams*, so long as they only lie scattered about us, as they always do to the *Unthinking*, lose their Influence, and can never administer so much Heat, as will make our *Altar burn*, or our *Sacrifice* send forth a Savour of Acceptance.

The Use and Design of what has been said on this Subject, is to recommend the Duty of holy Contemplation, and to engage us to allow stated Seasons to meditate on sacred and religious Matters ; to enter into serious Considerations concerning our future State, and the great and momentous Events of Eternity ; often to ask ourselves, whether we are in the right Way to Heaven, or pursuing the Paths that lead to Perdition ; often to demand of ourselves, to what Purpose we live in the World, what we were designed for, why we were made ; and then see whether we have answered these Ends in our Lives, whether we have behaved according to the excellent Rules of the Gospel, and the holy Pattern, which *the Author*

and Finisher of our Faith hath set us. This should be some Portion of our religious Exercise every Day : And, to excite the Performance of it, let it be remembered, that, unless we betake ourselves to serious *Meditation* now, that which *at present* would be a great Blessing to us, will *hereafter* be our Plague and Torment ; when Conscience shall awake out of the Sleep, in which we now detain it, and force upon us, whether we will or no, the Consideration of what we now industriously labour to forget, our Conduct and Proceedings in this State of Trial : When the horrid Scene of our sad Impieties shall start up before us at once ; when, being scourged with the Remembrance of past Enjoyments, and terrified with our present Passions, and groaning under the Conviction of Folly, we shall have our Shame and Anguish consummated by Despair. *Who so is wise will ponder these Things,* that, instead of knowing the Terrors, *they may understand the Loving-kindness of the Lord.*

Of Humility.

UNDER the Government of our Thoughts, may very properly be comprised the *Humility of Mind*, which consists in a modest and lowly Opinion of ourselves, our Endowments, and Acquisitions ; or in not valuing ourselves beyond what is *due* and *just*, upon the Account of any Good we are possessed of, whether it be *internal* or *external* ; but, contrariwise, in being content, that any one should think meanly and disparagingly of us ; ready to submit our Judgment to the Judgment of others ; careful to decline all Fame and Popularity ; and studious to conceal our own Praises and Excellencies, except when either the Glory of God, or Good of our Brother, are concerned in the Publication.

Under

Under this Consideration the Grace of *Humility* is opposed to *Pride* and *Vain-glory* ; which, however indulged in the *Heathen Morals*, and accounted a Principle fitted for great Undertakings, in the Revelation of the Divine Will, is utterly exploded, and represented as a detestable Thing, both in the Sight of God and Man. *Every one, that is proud in Heart, says Solomon, is an Abomination to the Lord* ; and therefore it might well follow, that, *though Hand join in Hand, he shall not be unpunished* : Whereas, *to this Man will I look, saith the Lord, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite Spirit, and trembleth at my Word*. Well therefore might our blessed Saviour, who came to correct the wrong Notions of *Heathen Moralists*, as well as fulfil and improve what was contained in the *Law* and the *Prophets*, lay the Foundation of his Religion in *Humility*, and place, in the very Front of his Beatitudes, *Blessed are the poor in Spirit* : Well might he require of his Followers, *to walk in Lowliness and Meekness* ; *to be clothed with Humility* ; and, *in Lowliness of Mind, to esteem others better than themselves* ; when, though he was a perfect Example of all moral and divine Perfections, yet he commends himself chiefly to their Imitation, upon the Account of this excellent Grace of *Humility* : *Learn of me ; for I am meek, and lowly of Heart, and ye shall find Rest unto your Souls*.

And indeed, whether we consider him in the Mystery of his Incarnation, in the mean Circumstances of his Birth, or in the obscure Method of his Life ; whether we consider him as emptying himself of his eternal Glories, and drawing, as it were, a Cloud over his inherent Brightness ; as forbidding the Devils, to publish his Divinity ; Men, to declare his Miracles ; and his Disciples to speak of his *Transfiguration* ; or, as washing his Disciples Feet, and conversing among Sinners :

These, and many other Instances of his Condescension, argue the most profound Humility, that can be imagined, and shew us withal the great Care, our Lord took to exemplify it upon all Occasions. For though, of all the Virtues and Excellencies in the World, this of *Humility*, one would think, was least capable of being practised by the Son of God; yet we may here discern, what rare Arts and Mysteries God has found out, to teach us this Lesson; and may thence be led to conclude, how much it concerns us to know, 1. The Reasonableness and Benefits, as well as, 2. The Means of attaining a Duty, that the Divine Wisdom has been so particularly solicitous to teach.

I. We usually think it a very humbling Consideration, to remind a Person of the Meanness of his *Original*: But what Original can be so mean, as to be sprung from *nothing*? It is enough to take down the Spirit of the brightest *Intelligence* to consider, that nothing was his Original, a State more vile and dishonourable, than the *Chaos* itself. Now this is the Condition of Man: He had his Rise from nothing, and derives his Pedigree from Darkness and Emptiness; and though, by Omnipotence, he is now become *something*, yet still he holds his Being as *precariously*, as he first received it, and depends as much upon the Will of his Creator for his Existence, as Light does upon the Sun, or the Image in the Glâs upon the Presence of the Body: For, if God does but turn his Face from him, and cease to behold him, he immediately, and without any other Influx, relapses into nothing. And shall that Being then be proud, which was once nothing, and has still such a natural Propensity towards *Annihilation*, as to need only a bare *Negative*, to make him nothing again? He certainly must forget his first Extraction, that can give the least Admittance to Pride; and, together

gether with that, must forget likewise the Method of his Preservation, if he has not a most *feeling* Sense of his Dependence and Insignificancy.

It is a strong Sarcastm upon human Pride, That which we meet with in the *Royal Preacher*, where it is said, *that Pride was not made for Man, nor furious Anger for them, that are born of a Woman*; for, fancy Pride where we will, it is no where so improper, no where so incongruously placed, as in Man: Not because his *Make* is only of the common Clay, neither tempered, nor figured, nor tinged more elegantly, than that of other Creatures; as infirm, and putrid, and contemptible, as any of theirs; for this is the least Part of his Abasement: It is a smaller Disgrace to his Pedigree, that *Corruption is his Father, and the Worm his Mother and Sister*, than that Sin is his *Off-spring*. His *Make* is but *common*, but his Depravation wholly *singular*: And therefore let the *Sea* be proud, whose Waves know their Bounds; let the *Beasts* be proud, who live agreeable to the Laws of their Nature; the *Locusts* and *Caterpillars*, who are *God's Armies*; the *Wind and Storm*, that fulfil his *Word*; but let not Man, the only Rebel in Nature, that stands distinguished from the rest of the Creation, not so much by his Reason, as by his Guilt, the only Heir of Wrath, and Shame, and Misery, let him not be proud; *Pride was not made for him*.

“ But, though this Prospect of Man be thus abasing, yet is there not another Light to consider him in? Are not the Accomplishments of Art, and Aids of Fortune, and much more the Endowments of Wisdom and Virtue, valuable Things, and Matters of our just Esteem? And may not our Imagination please and delight itself with these? ” These Things we allow, indeed, are justly estimable, but then we assert farther,

ther, that no Man ought to value himself for them ; and the Reason is, because they are not *his*, but God's, intrusted only to him, and for which he stands accountable : Treasures and *Talents* they are, *committed to the earthen Vessel*, but yet the Vessel itself is no more than *earthen* still. It is from a Prejudice of vulgar Mistake then, that we call any Advantages, supervenient to our Nature, by the Name of *Acquisitions*, as if the getting of them were imputable to the Glory of our own Counsels and Endeavours. St Paul plainly confutes this Notion, when he directs this Question to the Boaster ; *what hast thou, that thou hast not received ?* It is God, that, to the Attainment of all *outward* good Things, gives both the *Means*, the *Use*, and the *Issue* ; that, to the Attainment of all *inward* Accomplishments, gives both the *Capacity*, the *Application*, and the *Success* ; that, to the Attainment of all *moral* Perfections, gives both the *Power*, the *Will*, and the *Deed*. Nothing is more frequently taught us in Scripture, than that *every good and every perfect Gift cometh from above* ; that *of ourselves we can do nothing* ; that *all our Sufficiency is from God* : Passages to this Purpose are very numerous, as if the Holy Spirit were more than ordinary jealous of our Incredulity in this Point. But now, if it be asked, why God chuses to *dispense* good Things to us, rather than suffer us to *acquire* them ; why all our Perfections are *Gifts*, and why we are so often, and so instantly put in Mind, that they are so ? The Reason is given in the foregoing Place of the Apostle, *Why then dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received ?* To receive, and to glory, to be obliged, and yet to be proud, is pure *Absurdity* ; as absurd as it were for a Man to think himself rich, merely because he has borrowed a large Sum.

Thus, whether we consider the Original, or Corruption, the Defects, or Accomplishments of our Nature,

Nature, the greatest possible Humility and Self-annihilation become our reasonable Duty; but this is not all: Our blessed Saviour, who laid the Foundation of his Religion in this spiritual Grace, has told us expressly, that, *except we be converted, and become as little Children, we shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*; but that *he, who shall humble himself as a little Child, the same shall be greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven*. By the Kingdom of Heaven, in this Place, may be intended, both the Kingdom of Grace, and the Kingdom of Glory. *The Kingdom of Grace* is that sweet and gentle Government, which Christ, the Son of God, and King of Saints, does, by his Spirit, exercise over his Followers, and such as have given themselves up to his Conduct: *The Kingdom of Glory* is the future Reward and Recompence, which God intends to bestow in the celestial Mansions of Bliss, upon all those, that have persevered in their Obedience to his Commands: And so the Words import, that Humility of Mind is highly conducive to make us both truly religious here, and eternally happy hereafter.

The Declaration, which God makes by the Mouth of his holy Prophet, is this, ——— *Thus saith the high and mighty One, that inhabiteth Eternity, whose Name is holy, I dwell in the high and holy Place, and with him also, that is of a contrite Spirit*: And, if we would enquire for the Reason, why the Majesty of Heaven vouchsafes this Honour to Spirits of this Complexion, we shall find, that Humility indeed is the true Foundation of Union and Commerce between God and the Soul. For as it implies in its Notion a due Sense of our Want and Insufficiency; so it carries in it the whole Reason of Prayer, and Application, and Dependence upon God: As it implies in it a just Sense of the Divine Bounty, from whence come all our Supplies; so

it carries in it the Reason of *Praise* and Thanksgiving : As it implies a Sense of our own Unworthiness, it is in Effect the same with the *Fear* of God ; a Sense of our Distance, the same with the *Honour* of God ; and a Sense of our Obligation, the same with our *Love* of God : Of so large an Extent is the Power and Influence of this single Virtue, that, let a Man but take Care to encourage and cultivate it, it will naturally and easily lead him through all the Offices of a religious Life. Nor will it only lead him through these, but fit him likewise for Heaven, and prepare him for the Mansions of the Blessed, where his Poverty of Spirit shall be recompensed with a Kingdom, and his Humility with a Crown ; with a Crown *incorruptible*, that fadeth not away, and whose Glory and Lustre will be equal to the Measure of his Humility and Self-abasement : *Humble yourselves* therefore, says the Apostle, *under the mighty Hand of God, that he may exalt you in due Time ; for whosoever shall humble himself, as a little Child, the same shall be greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven.* And therefore,

II. To come to the Means of attaining this heavenly Grace, let us frequently call to Remembrance the Words of our gracious Lord and Saviour ; *Blessed are the poor in Spirit* : Blessed are they *in themselves*, as being free from Ambition and Envy, from Anger and Revenge, and all such boisterous and troublesome Passions, as make the arrogant and self-conceited Mind uneasy, and unhappy in the Midst of all the good Things that this World can afford : Blessed are they *in the Sight of God*, who sees their Heart, and sees there the lovely, the amiable, the charming Virtue ; a Virtue very agreeable to his Divine Nature, *who dwelleth on high, and yet humbleth himself to behold the Things in Heaven and Earth* ; and, seeing his
own

own Image there, he cannot but have Respect unto the Lowly : Blessed in the Eyes of Men, who naturally reverence those, that have mean Opinions of themselves ; and therefore the Apostle calls this Virtue the Ornament of a meek and quiet Spirit, which not only in the Sight of God is of great Price, but, through its own inward Excellency, commands likewise the Love and Respect of all, that behold it : Blessed amidst all the Changes and Chances of Life ; for while this Grace reigns in his Soul, however despised or abused by wicked Men, God's Spirit hovers over him, Angels visit and attend him, his own Conscience justifies him, and the Lord Jesus, that Pattern of all Humility, loves him : But much more blessed in the Conclusion of it, when being translated to the City of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, he shall enter upon his glorious Inheritance, and there, together with an innumerable Company of Angels, with the general Assembly and Church of the First-born, which are written in Heaven, with God, the Judge of all, and with Jesus, the Mediator of the new Covenant, enjoy unspeakable Happiness for ever.

2. To the same Purpose, let us frequently consider the sad and mischievous Effects of Pride ; that this Vice first brought Rebellion and Strife into Heaven, and cast down the Apostate Angels thence ; that every proud Man robs God of the Honour due to his Providence, erects new Altars to strange Deities, and, by the wildest of all Idolatry, burns Incense to himself ; that Pride makes Men haughty and assuming in their Carriage, peevish and perverse in their Humour, troublesome and contentious in Business, cavilling and captious in Conversation ; and is therefore far from gaining the Love and Esteem of others : But, above all, that this is a Vice destructive to our Souls, as it covers our lurking Faults, and draws a Veil before our

our Weaknesses and Wants; as it prevents all Repentance, and proves a certain Bar to all Improvements: For it shuts the Door against Admonition and Reproof, forbids the Advice of Friends, and silences the Checks of Conscience. The most *slender* Appearances of Virtue it brings near and magnifies, the most *deformed* Blemishes it throws off, and lessens to the Eye, so that Delusion only reigns, and Truth is never received, till some awakening Dispensation does at last, perhaps too late, discover the Man to himself.

3. To the same Purpose, let us frequently meditate on the Saints of God, those great Exemplars of Humility, that are recorded in the Holy Scriptures: How *Abraham*, who had the Honour to be stiled *God's Friend*, made no Difficulty to humble himself with the Name of *Dust and Ashes*; how *Jacob* confesses himself *less than the least of God's Mercies*; how *David* acknowledges himself *a Worm, and no Man*; how the great Teacher of the *Gentiles*, who was taken up into the *third Heaven*, and had Revelations imparted to him, too glorious for human Tongue to utter, descends so low as to term himself *the least of the Apostles, not meet to be called an Apostle*, and what is more, not only *less than the least of all Saints*, but even *the chief of Sinners*. But, above all, let us set before us the meek and lowly Jesus, who, *though he was in the Form of God, and thought it no Robbery to be equal with God, yet humbled himself to the Form of a Servant, and became obedient unto Death, even the Death of the Cross*. And shall not we, for whose Sakes all this was done and suffered, give Proof of an humble and submissive Spirit? Shall not *the same Mind be in us*, which was in our gracious Saviour? Yes, this is our Duty, this our Interest; and therefore we will set this Pattern always before our Eyes, and, in the constant Course of our Actions, bear it always in

in Mind, that Pride in him, who calls himself a *Christian*, is perfectly absurd, and more intolerable, than in any other Sort of Men, because the Author of the Christian Religion was so *humble*.

SECT. I.

Of the Government of our Passions and Affections.

BY the Word *Passion* we understand, either a strong *Tendency* of our Souls towards something, that we look upon as very *good*, and conducive to our Happiness; or a strong *Aversion*, and Resolution to fly from what we apprehend to be *evil* and pernicious to us: And this, on both Sides, attended with such a sensible Commotion of the Blood and Spirits, as keeps the Mind much employed upon the present Affair, to the Exclusion of every Thing else, and the Prevention, many Times, of all deliberate Reasoning concerning our Conduct.

In this Respect therefore it differs from *Affection*, properly so called; for *Affection* is the *Desire* or *Aversion* we have to any Object, that we conceive to be *good* or *evil*, but without any bodily Disorder, and is therefore a simple *Modification* of the Mind: Whereas *Passion* is always attended with a violent Motion, in which we feel a Kind of Pain and Uneasiness, whether the Object, that causes it, be *good* or *bad*. For we find by Experience, that, in this imperfect State of our Nature, the most agreeable Passion, even that of *Joy*, has something in it, that overcomes and presses us too close; that causes an *Uneasiness* in the Midst of Delight, and is sometimes so violent, as to sink us under the Weight of more Happiness, than we can bear.

For

For this Reason I presume it is, that the *Stoicks* of old looked upon all Passions and Affections (for we take them in a promiscuous Sense) as sinful *Perturbations*, destructive to the Mind's Tranquillity, and incompatible with the Character of their *wise Man*. Whereas it is plain, that the God of Nature has given us these Impressions to our great Benefit and Advantage; whereby we are enabled to pursue, and overtake what is good, and conducive to our Happiness; and to fly from, and escape what is hurtful, and would tend to our Uneasiness; and which are then only culpable, when they are either *misplaced* upon unworthy Objects, or excessive *in Degree*, when placed right.

That Health of Body, Competence of Fortune, the Succour of Relations, Friendships, and the like, are necessary Conveniencies of Life cannot be denied; and therefore so much *Desire* of these Things is consistent with Reason and Religion, as is necessary to procure them; so much *Joy* in the Possession of them, as is necessary to retain them by all honest Methods; so much *Anger* at those that invade them, as is necessary to guard them; and so much *Sorrow* at the Loss of them, as will put us upon all fit Endeavours to recover them: For, without being moved and affected with these Accommodations of Life, it is plain enough, that we should take no Manner of Care of them. Reason indeed is the proper *Arbitrator* of what is good and evil; but, when Reason has once given its Determination, the Passions are ready to lend us their Assistance: They fix all the natural Spirits and Thoughts of the Mind strongly upon those Objects which they excite; and, with a sudden Call, awaken all the Powers of Nature to act agreeably to their Propensions. If the Object be *uncommon*, and has any Thing in it rare and wonderful, the Passion of *Admiration* fixes the Mind to consider

consider it with strong Attention; if the Object appears to be *good*, the Passion of *Love* determines the Mind to pursue it with Vigour; if it be represented as *evil*, the Passion of *Hatred* excites us to use our utmost Skill and Force to avoid it: Amidst the Number of Dangers that do surround us, *Fear* is a very necessary Principle, to keep us always upon our Guard: In a malicious and ill-natured World, *Anger* is of great Use to protect us from Injury, and make Oppressors fearful to assault us: And, while we are so apt to expose ourselves to many Grievances and Distresses, by our own Folly, it was wisely done in God, to ordain *Sorrow* to attend all these Distresses, and *Shame* some of them, that thereby we might be awakened to renounce our Follies, from the shameful and painful Sense of them. And, in like Manner, the more pleasing Affections of Nature, such as *Hope*, and *Love*, and *Joy*, make Life more comfortable, and the Troubles of it more tolerable, as well as give a grateful Relish and Delight to all the difficult Duties of Virtue and Godliness, by their being mixed up in our Constitution.

Of such singular Use to the Purposes of Life are the Passions and Affections, both *pleasant* and *painful*, which God has implanted in our Nature; and therefore we need less wonder, that we find our blessed Saviour, in whom the Perfection of it was conspicuous, expressing, upon all Occasions, the same Love and Desire, the same Anger and Aversion, the same Fear and Hope, and the same Sorrow and Joy which we find in ourselves; with this only Difference, that what in us is so often exorbitant, in him was always free from any irregular Perturbation: For it behoved him, as the Apostle speaks, *to be made in all Things like unto his Brethren*; *to be touched with the Feeling of our Infirmities*; and, *in all Points, to be tempted like as we*

we are, yet without Sin, that he might be a merciful as well as a faithful High-Priest, in Things pertaining to God.

It is vain and absurd Advice, therefore, which some *Sages* have given us, to endeavour to suppress our *Passions*, by letting one to depose and destroy another: For, besides the perpetual Tumults that this Method would occasion, our *Passions* cannot be destroyed: They are inherent in our Nature; they are indelible, and inseparable from it; inso-much that, even in the World of Spirits, when our Souls shall be in a State of Separation, (much more, when our Bodies shall be re-united to them at the Resurrection) we shall have such joyous or dolorous Perceptions as are suitable to the State and Condition we are in, whether happy or miserable; and these Perceptions will be continually increasing to all Eternity, as the Causes and Objects of them make new and stronger Impressions. In one Respect, indeed, these Impressions cannot strictly be called *Passions*, because there can be no extraordinary Commotion of the Blood and Spirits in a State wherein even our Bodies shall be *spiritualised*; yet there is no Doubt but that we shall be infinitely more affected with the Objects of the *other* World, whether good or evil, and thereby feel either such Confusion and Disorder, or such Joy and Delight in our Souls, as will make us, beyond Comparison, more happy, or more miserable, than it is possible for us to be in *this*. It is not our *Passions* then that we are to destroy; for that we cannot: They will last, the chief of them at least will last, as long as we have our Being, and be instrumental to our future, as well as present, happy or unhappy Condition; but it is the Extravagancy of them that we are to reduce to good Order, and bring under the Government of Reason and Religion: And to this Purpose we shall observe, 1. What it is to regulate

regulate our Passions and Affections; 2. The great Benefits and Advantages of doing this; and 3. What Rules and Considerations may be conducive hereunto.

I. Though our Passions and Affections, especially in the Rise and first Workings of them, are very little subject to the Command of our Will; yet they depend, in some Measure, upon the Perceptions of our Minds. We are so constituted by Nature, that, as soon as we form the Idea of certain Objects or Events, our *Desire* or *Aversion* will immediately take the Alarm; and, consequently, our Affections must very much depend upon the Opinions we form concerning any Thing that occurs to our Minds, its *Qualities*, *Tendencies*, and *Effects*. Thus *Love* is occasioned by the Conception of *good* Qualities, *Hatred* by the Apprehension of the contrary in any Object; *Fear* arises from the Opinion of Power and Inclination to hurt us; *Pity*, from the Sense of another's undeserved Misery; and *Shame*, from the Supposition of another's Contempt of us. A great Part, therefore, of the Government of our Passions will consist in forming right Notions of what we call *Good* and *Evil*: For, if we are mistaken herein, and look upon that as a great Good, which is in Reality a destructive Evil, or that as a formidable Evil, which is, in Truth, a very valuable Good; it is plain, that our Passions will be most wretchedly misplaced; and, as we shall love and desire what we should by all Means avoid, so shall we hate and fly from what deserves our Love and Pursuit; and, in Consequence of this, we shall inevitably and speedily bring Ruin upon ourselves, by those very Methods which we thought would have made us happy.

The only Way then to prevent all this Mischief is to begin upon a new Bottom, to go upon new Principles of Action; to rectify our Notions of
Good

Good and Evil, to engage our Affections upon their proper Objects, and, even where they are laudably placed, there to restrain them from being *excessive*. To this Purpose, we must not rejoice at Passages that should be resented with Grief, nor delight in Things which we are bound to detest, nor be angry at Things wherewith we should be pleased, nor be too eager and hot in the Pursuit of any worldly Advantage, too much transported when we have attained it, or too much concerned when we are disappointed of it. *The Kingdom of God and his Righteousness* are what we must *first* of all seek; God we must above all Things love; *publick* we must prefer before *private* Good; never be *angry* without a just Cause; never *resent* an Affliction beyond its Weight: In Matters of worldly Joy, never be greatly *transported*; and, on Occasions of worldly Grief, never be *dejected* beyond Measure.

Thus to place our Affections upon proper and deserving Objects, and to make them commensurate to the Value of the Objects upon which they are engaged, is a great Step towards our Regulation of them: But then we must remember, that *all* our Affections, the *merry* and *cheerful*, as well as the *painful* and *angry* ones, are to be kept under this Controul, that the Mind may not be too much depressed with *the latter*, nor foolishly elated and transported with the *former*. For he only is the Man, that may be truly said *to rule his own Spirit*, who neither sinks under Affliction, nor is puffed up with Prosperity; who is not only secure from being fretted with grievous Anger, and torn with Revenge and Envy; but is moreover not enslaved with Lust, nor lifted up with Pride, nor estranged from God by the *Idolatry* of Covetousness, and the bewitching Love of the sensual Pleasures; who, in short, has all his Passions under an *habitual* Governance, being at
all

all Times provided against *desiring* insatiably and *grieving* immoderately, and *being angry* unreasonably; at all Times prepared against all Accidents, and armed against all Temptations by long Consideration, much Resolution, and great Experience. And so we proceed,

II. To consider some of the Benefits and Advantages of ruling our Passions in this Manner. The wise Man has a very remarkable Proverb; *He that has no Rule over his own Spirit is like a City that is broken down, and without Walls*; a City in this Condition will be liable, at all Times, to be surpris'd by the Enemy: And, in like Manner, as long as we live in this World, there will be Provocations, Temptations to Lust, and Revenge, and Envy; there will be Crosses and Disappointments; there will be doubtful and suspected Sayings; there will be Fuel for our Passions administered in great Abundance, wherever we converse, or have any Business to transact: And therefore for a Man to have *no Rule over his Spirit* is to be expos'd to the perpetual Torment either of furious Wrath, or gnawing Envy, or bitter Sorrow, or miserable Fear, or impatient Desire, &c. which, besides the Uneasiness they give to the Mind, do seldom fail to shake the Constitution of the Body; to waste the Flesh, and sour the Blood, and poison the Spirits; and by that Means impair the Health, bring on Diseases, and shorten the Compass of Man's Life. But well were it for us, if the Consequence of unruly Passions were only felt in this Life: The sad Consideration of all is, that, by the Influence of these, we contract a vast Heap of Guilt, and are liable to the angry Justice of God, whose Authority we all the while contemn, and whose just and holy Precepts we break: For every Excess of Passion, and every wrong Use of our Affections, are so many Violations of the Laws

of God, which, without a sincere and timely Repentance, will make all that are guilty of them endlessly miserable in the World to come.

On the contrary, he who has got the Rule and Dominion over his Passions and Affections is like *a City whose Walls* are compleat, and so regularly fortified that they despise the rudest Assaults of the most desperate and enraged Enemy; or, rather, is like the Steadiness of a Rock, which holds its Place, and is immoveable, though never so violent and boisterous Waves beat furiously against it. The Blandishments of Sense are no Allurements to him; because he has learnt that external Pleasures are short and transitory, leave no agreeable Reflection, and are no Manner of Advantage to us when they are past. The Disappointments of Life make no uneasy Impression upon him, because he remembers that all Things of this Nature are under the Appointment of wise Providence, which in other Respects has been abundantly bountiful to him, and *shall we receive Good at the Hand of God, and not receive Evil?* The Apprehension of Pains sits light upon him, because he considers, that, if they be violent, they will probably be short; if not, they are mixed with long Intervals of Ease, and that, when they are quite past, they leave no unpleasant Reflection: Nay, the very Prospect of Death, of a violent and unnatural Death, for the Sake of Righteousness, loses its Terror, upon Thoughts of the Honour and Approbation to be expected from God and good Men, as well as their own Consciences, if they continue firm; and, on the contrary, the Remorse, Shame, and Fear of future Punishment, if their Hearts should fail them when they come to the Conflict, and have not Courage enough *to resist unto Blood.*

Thus is the Man, who, by Reason and Reflection, has taught himself the Art of ruling his Passions,

sions, to all the Temptations, both of Pleasure or Pain, that do every-where surround him, inaccessible. And, if we proceed to the more immediate Offices of Religion, we shall find, that the Thing which occasions the Practice of Virtue and Piety to be so uneasy and irksome to us, is not so much their Contrariety to the Temper of our Minds, as the ill Use we have made of our natural Powers, and their Pre-engagement to Vice: Because, when we are once come to ourselves, and have reduced our Affections to their natural Order, Religion then will become agreeable to us, and the Service of God our *perfect Freedom*. For how plain and smooth will our Way then lie before us, and what inconceivable Delight shall we take in *walking in it*, when, by the Grace of God, and the Assistance of his good Spirit, we are come to that happy Pass as to have no Errors or Extravagancies in our Passions and Affections, but find all their Motions regular and right! When we shall *admire and love, desire and hope*, for nothing with great Earnestness, but to be like God, and his Divine Son, our blessed Redeemer, in Purity and Holiness *here*, that so we may become capable of the blissful Enjoyment of them *hereafter*: And, in the mean Time, *rejoice* in nothing so much as in the Testimony of a good Conscience; *hate* nothing so much as Sin, which indeed is the greatest and most destructive Evil; *dread* nothing so much as to be surpris'd and overcome by it in any Instance; and find ourselves never so deeply affected with *Sorrow* and Compunction of Spirit, as when we have been so unhappy as to be betrayed into it: When our Passions, I say, are brought into this Course, they will flow silently and smoothly on, and bring us to the Enjoyment of our *supreme Good*; which we shall then pursue without any Perturbation. Therefore.

III. To lay down some Rules for the Acquisition of this good Government of our Passions, one of our principal Cares must be to resist them in the Beginning, before they become inordinate; to check and rebuke all malicious and revengeful, all unclean and lascivious, all covetous and repining Thoughts, at their first starting up in our Minds; because there is no dallying with corrupt and impure Imaginations, nor any knowing how *great a Fire, a small Spark* of this Nature, when let alone, *may be able to kindle*. To the same Purpose it may be adviseable to inure ourselves to cross our Passions when there is no Danger, and to restrain our Appetites sometimes from ordinary and lawful Enjoyments, that we may do it with more Ease when dangerous Temptations shall assault us: And withal it will be necessary to fly all Occasions that may incense the Passion whereunto we are naturally inclined: For *can a Man take Fire in his Bosom, and his Cloaths not be burnt?* Or, if he willingly goes into the Company of infected Persons, can he blame any but himself, if he falls into their Diseases? Our more particular Vigilance must therefore be employed against *that Sin which does so easily beset us*; against that Passion which we must have least in our Power, because it arises most from our Complexion; always remembering to make it our ardent Supplication to God, that he, *who giveth Wisdom liberally, and upbraideth not*, would teach us the Wisdom of governing our Passions, and, by the Strength and Assistance of his blessed Spirit, give us the Victory over them; that, passing our Lives in all Peace and Quietness, we may, in the Conclusion of them, be found *meet to be Partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light*, and to be conducted into that happy Place where the *War between the Law in our Minds and the Law in our Members*, between the Dictates of our Reason and the

the Propensities of our Passions, will expire in an everlasting Peace.

Of Meekness.

OF all the Passions that God has implanted in our Nature, that which occasions the greatest *Perturbation*, and is therefore more peculiarly called *Passion*, is *Anger*. Anger however, as we had Occasion to observe before, is not always culpable: It is only so indeed when it either arises from an unwarrantable Cause, or proceeds to an excessive Degree; and this the Evangelical Grace of *Meekness* is designed to restrain: For Meekness is that Temper or Disposition of Mind whereby a Man so moderates and commands the Passion of Anger, as not to be carried to any such Excess of it as may either discompose himself or injure his Neighbour. After therefore we have, 1. Shewn the Nature and Reasonableness of this Duty, we shall, 2. Suggest some Considerations that may be of Use to enforce the Practice of it.

I. Among all our natural Passions there is none wherein both our own and our Neighbour's Happiness is so often and so much concerned as in that of Anger: *So often*, because it is a Thing of daily Incurfion; and *so much*, because it endangers the Strength and Stability both of *private* and *publick* Peace; and, consequently, such a due Moderation of this Passion as may secure both, is a very considerable Instance of that *Charity* which the Apostle tells us is the *fulfilling of the Law*. The *Jewish* Law indeed, which admitted of a *Retaliation* of Injuries, made little or no Provision for this Virtue, which was equally excluded from the System of *Heathen Morals*; but our blessed Saviour, who came to advance human Nature to its utmost Perfection, makes Humility and Meekness the two

great *Fundamentals* of his Religion. *Come unto me,* says he, *and learn of me*: But what are we to learn? Not to restore Sight to the Blind or Life to the Dead; but learn of me; for *I am meek and lowly in Heart*. But why did our Lord propose these Virtues only to our Imitation? Was it because he had no other, or because he excelled in these above the rest? In him dwelt the Fulness of the Godhead, which is not consistent with the Absence of any one Virtue; and though, as to the *outward* Exercise, he might be more remarkable for one than another, according as Opportunities or Circumstances might require; yet, as to the *inward* Habits and Dispositions themselves, he was equally perfect in them all; and therefore the Reason why he recommends only these two to his Followers must be, partly, because he was the only Master that could teach them, and partly because there was some special Excellency in the Virtues themselves, above any other of the Christian Law; and therefore we find him comprising the whole under these two Articles, *Take my Yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in Heart*.

And indeed, if we attend a little to the Story and Process of his Life, we shall soon see, that never was any Man's *Meekness* so tried as was his: For, as the real Excellence and Dignity of his Person heightened every *Affront* and rude Treatment of him, to an incomparable Degree, so did the outward Lowness and Meanness of his Condition expose him to an infinite Number of them; and yet, notwithstanding the Number and Heinousness of his Provocations, we do not find that he was ever in the least discomposed, or put into a Passion by them. *Moses* indeed was a Man so very eminent for this Virtue, that the Scripture gives us this Character of him, *that he was very meek, above all the Men which were upon the Face*
of

of the Earth; and yet we find, that, with all his Meekness, he could not bear with the Perverseness of that untractable People the Jews, who, as the Psalmist's Observation is, *so provoked his Spirit, that he spake unadvisedly with his Lips*. Now our blessed Lord had to deal with the same Generation of Men, but under infinitely greater Prejudices and Disaffections: From them he suffered more Indignities than ever could be offered to *Moses*; and yet none of their ill Usage raised any angry Resentment in him, though they did it in those that stood by and beheld his Abuses. Thus the Unkindness of the rude *Samaritans* could not so much as strike a Spark into his Divine Breast, when, at the same Time, it made his two zealous Disciples, *James* and *John*, kindle to that Degree as to desire Fire from Heaven to consume them: And, in like Manner, the rough Seizure of his sacred Person by the Soldiers could not extort from him so much as an angry Look, when yet the very Sight of it made his warm Disciple draw his Sword. *If I have spoken Evil, bear Witness of the Evil; but, if well, why smitest thou me?* is all the Answer that he returned to the insulting Officer who struck him. What could be said more mild or dispassionate? What could argue a more sedate and well-governed Spirit? His greatest Apostle, when under a less Provocation, had not this Command over himself; for, being not actually smitten, but only ordered by the High-Priest to be so treated, he returns him this sharp and severe Answer, *God shall smite thee, thou whitened Wall; for sittest thou to judge me after the Law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the Law?* There is not indeed any Thing in this Answer but what may be justified by the Provocation; but yet we cannot but perceive a great Difference between the Behaviour of the Master and the Disciple, though this is far from being the

highest Instance of his Meekness. To have a due Estimate of that, we must look upon him under the Shame, and Dishonour, and Torments of the Cross, encountering, at once, with the Pains and Agonies of Death, the Contradictions of Sinners, and the Vengeance of Almighty God, and all this without any the least Shew of Impatience or Discomposure; and then we shall find the Prediction of the Prophet verified to the full; *He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his Mouth; he was brought as a Lamb to the Slaughter, and as a Sheep before her Shearers is dumb, so he opened not his Mouth.*

And it was fit indeed, that our blessed Saviour, both by his Precept and Example, should recommend a Virtue to us, which proceeds from a Greatness and Generosity of Mind, and is itself a noble Atchievement; for *he that is slow to Anger, is better than he that is mighty, and he that ruleth his Spirit, than he that taketh a City*: A Virtue, which is an Enemy to Pride and Arrogance, to Contention and Turbulency, to Morosity and Peevishness, to Reviling and Censuring, and whatever is the Product of a bitter and cholerick Spirit: A Virtue, which is fitted to all the Purposes of our Lives, and requisite in all Degrees and Conditions of Men; in *Superiors*, that they may rule with Affection; in *Inferiors*, that they may behave with Submission; in *Parents*, that they provoke not their Children to Wrath; and in *Children*, that they obey their Parents in all Things; in the *Rich*, that they be not puffed up with Pride; in the *Poor*, that they do not swell with Envy; in those of *mature Age*, that they be not morose and froward; in those that are *young*, that they shew Reverence to their Elders; and, in short, in all, that they bring Honour to their Religion and holy Profession. This is the Virtue, which, in the Sight

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of God, is an Ornament of great Price ; which gains us the Good-will and Favour of Men ; which conquers the Malice and Prejudice of Enemies ; which allays all Storms and Tempests in our Breasts ; gives us the quiet Enjoyment of ourselves, and a true Relish of what we possess ; and in this Sense we may properly enough understand the Words of our Saviour, Blessed are the Meek, for they shall inherit the Earth.

The Meek indeed, we may generally observe, are far from having the largest Share of this World's Plenty : It is to the Bold and Daring, that Things of this Nature are usually allotted : *These are they, that prosper in the World, and have Riches in Possession ;* nor can it be imagined, that our blessed Lord, who himself made Choice of a State of Poverty, who recommends so earnestly a Contempt of the World, warns us of the Danger of Riches, and dissuades us from laying up Treasures on Earth, should ever pronounce a meek Man blessed, merely for having Abundance of Wealth. The Sense of the Words therefore must relate to the *Manner* of possessing, rather than the *Greatness* of the Possessions, and so must import, — that the meek Man shall enjoy what he has, be it little, or be it much, with Comfort and Satisfaction of Mind, being prepared to acquiesce in every Dispensation of Providence, and to confine his Wants and Desires to his present Circumstances ; whereas those of a contrary Disposition, though they may *possess* a great deal, may yet be truly said to *enjoy* little or nothing : And this seems to be the Sense of the *Psalmist*, when, in Words directly parallel to these of our Lord, he tells us, that *the Meek-spirited shall possess the Earth, and be refreshed in the Multitude of Peace, i. e.* they have Pleasure and Content in whatever they have ; for, as he immediately subjoins, *a small Thing, that the Righteous has, is better than great*

great Riches of the Ungodly. Which leads us to observe,

II. What may be of Use to engage the Practice of this Duty. And, to this Purpose, it will be requisite for us frequently to consider, *where* we are, *whom* we converse with, and *what* is our main Concern. We live in a troublesome and tempestuous World; we converse with Men of corrupt Natures and evil Dispositions; our main Business and Concern lies in a distant and heavenly Country; and therefore we must not affect Ease and Tranquillity here, we must not expect to *gather Grapes from Thorns, or Figs from Thistles*. It is impossible *but that Offences should come*; but then, when they come, we have wherewith to rebate their Sting, by considering, that this is the common Fate of human Life; that every Thing is sent upon us by the Providence of God; and that by his wise Appointment it is, that thro' many Trials and Tribulations we must enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

To the same Purpose, it may be proper frequently to reflect on the horrid Deformity, and mischievous Consequences of immoderate Anger; what Agonies of Mind, what Disorder of Spirits, what desperate Absurdities of Behaviour, what Fury and Phrensy it hurries Men into; what rash Oaths, what horrible Imprecations, what blasphemous, nay, what senseless Profanation of God's most holy Name; what Virulence of Expression, what base Divulging of Secrets, what Injuries and Violations of intimate Confidences, which are sure to be condemned ever after, but, perhaps, can never be repaired again. These Things are so notorious, and so incident to the Passion of Anger, that I verily believe, no Man ever saw another violently transported with it, who did not either pity or despise him; and that none was ever so transported himself, who did not commit something, whereof
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He did not find sufficient Cause, upon second Reflection, both to repent and be ashamed of. But, on the other Hand, how calm is the Mind, how serene the Countenance, how mild the Language, how engaging the Behaviour, how sweet the Sleep, how grateful the Repast, how prosperous the spiritual Estate, how happy and delightful the whole Life of him, that has brought his angry Passions under Subjection; that is at Peace with himself, and at Peace with the whole World; that is neither devising Mischief against others, nor suspecting any to be contrived against himself! So true is the Observation of the wise Man, that *he, who is slow to Anger, is of great Understanding, but he, that is hasty of Spirit, exalteth Folly.*

But, above all, the Folly or Wisdom of these different Tempers will then appear, when this short Scene of Things shall be shifted; when we shall be removed into an immortal World of Spirits, and have, each of us, our Souls sorted into their proper Place and Company; when the Proud and Arrogant, the Peevish and Quarrelsome, shall be consigned to the sad Abode of Spirits of their own Complexion, there to wrangle out a long Eternity in perpetual Feuds and Contentions, in perpetual vexing and tormenting one another; while the Meek and Gentle, the Quiet and Peaceable, shall be received into the Society of heavenly Lovers, into the Regions of Peace and Tranquillity, and into the Bosom of that blessed Jesus, who, in our own Nature, set us the Example of this most excellent Virtue, *that we might follow his Steps.*

To this Purpose therefore let it finally be considered, that, how mean and despicable a Figure soever the Man of a meek and *pacifick* Temper may seem to make in this World of Tumult and Confusion, yet the Time will come, when Persons, that have raised the greatest Noise and Bustle,
those

those Sons of *Thunder* and restless Intrigue, that have laid the World waste, and turned it upside down, to gratify their boundless Ambition and ungoverned Appetites, shall take up the Sentiment of the wise Son of *Syrach*, and say, *This is he, whom we had sometimes in Derision, and for a Proverb of Reproach: We Fools*, then it shall be, *accounted his Life Madness, and his End to be without Honour; but how is he now numbered among the Children of God, and his Lot is among the Saints!*

Of Contentment.

UNDER the Regulation of our Passions and Affections, we may not improperly place the *Art of Contentment*, which consists in such an Acquiescence and good Pleasure in that Condition of Life, wherein the Providence of God has placed us, as will not suffer the Desire of Change to trouble our Spirit, and discompose our Duty; as will engage us to entertain all Occurrences of Life, and even the severest Dispensations of Heaven, not only with Patience and Submission, which was a Point insisted on before, not only with Calmness and Composedness, which may proceed sometimes from a Stupidity of Temper, but with a real Complacency and Chearfulness of Mind; counting it all Joy, as the Apostle terms it, *when we fall into divers Temptations; because we know the trying of our Faith worketh Patience, and, if Patience have her perfect Work, she will make us perfect and intire, wanting nothing.*

To discover the Reasonableness then of being habitually well-pleased with our State and Condition, of what Kind soever it be, let us,

I. Look up to God, in whom we live, move, and have our Being; and in him consider the ample Provision he has made for our Necessities. Our
Necessities

Necessities indeed, if we consult Nature, are not many; *the chief Things for Life*, as the Son of *Syrach* computes them, are *Water, and Bread, and Cloathing, and an House to cover Shame*; and of these the Generality of Mankind are not destitute: For, though they may not have them poured into their Laps by Birth-right and Inheritance, yet they have them by their daily Industry and Acquisition, which, perhaps, is as good a Tenure. The great Apostle *St Paul*, though he might have exacted a Maintenance of the Church, in Behalf of his *Ministry*, yet thought himself rich enough, while he was able to work for his Living. He rejoices, indeed, in the Love of the *Philippians*, who had been so kind, as to make a *Contribution* for him; but he takes Care to inform them, that he did not rejoice so much, because they had *made him rich*, as because they had done their Duty, and were *rich in good Works*: *Not that I speak in Respect of Want*, says he, *for I have learned, in whatsoever State I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; everywhere, and in all Things, I am instructed, both to be full, and to be hungry, both to abound, and to suffer Need: Nevertheless, ye have well done, in that ye did communicate with my Affliction.*

The most disconsolate State is, that of Sicknefs or Old-Age, in Conjunction with Poverty; but even here God has made a competent Provision, by assigning all such, as have this double Load upon them, to the Care and Relief of the *Rich*. These he has made his Proxies and Representatives upon such Occasions; and, though many of them scandalously falsify their Trust in this Regard, yet, in all Parts, there are some scattered here and there, like *Cities of Refuge* in the Land, whereunto those, that are in Want and Distress, may seasonably fly for Succour; insomuch, that, what
with

with the *legal* Provisions that are made in this Case, and what with the voluntary Contributions of the Charitable, few, very few, I hope, want the Things that are absolutely necessary; which the Apostle comprises in the small Compass of *Food and Raiment*, and proposes them as Materials sufficient for Content: For as it is an easier Thing to satisfy the *Cravings* of an *hungry*, than to cure the *Squeamishness* of a *surfeited* Stomach; so certainly the Discontents of the Poor are much easier allayed, than those of the Rich. The Indigence of the one has contracted his Desires, and taught him to look no farther, than a little beyond bare Necessaries; so that a *moderate* Alms satisfies, and a *liberal* one transports him: But he, who, by perpetual *Repletion*, has his Desires stretched and extended, is capable of no such Satisfaction. In short, he, who can put an End to his *Wishes*, (as the contented Man always does) with the same Labour puts an End to his *Uneasiness* too; for Uneasiness is the natural Motive of Desire, and, reciprocally, he, whose Desires are satisfied, has all the Happiness, that is attainable in this Life. It is to be observed farther of the Blessings of God, that the greater and more substantial they are, the more they are in Number, and of common Use. The four Elements, of Fire, Water, Air, and Earth, are appointed to supply every Man's Occasions and Needs. The whole Host of Heaven, the Sun, Moon, and Stars, are by God divided to all Nations. The Sun shines as bright on the poor *Cottage*, as on the most magnificent *Palace*; and the Stars have their *benign Aspects*, as well for him, that is *behind the Mill*, as for him, that *sitteth on the Throne*. All our Senses, all the Members of our Bodies, all the Powers and Faculties of our Souls, which, by the Blessing of God, most of us enjoy perfect and intire, are not only more in Num-
ber,

ber, but of far greater Value, than what we fancy we want, in order to our Happiness. *For, is not the Life more than Meat, says our Saviour, and the Body than Raiment? Take no Heed, therefore, for your Life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your Body, what ye shall put on: "Hath not God bestowed upon you that which is infinitely better than all those Things, about which you are wont to be so solicitous? And will he deny you the less, who has granted you the greater Boon? Doubt not your Heavenly Father know that ye have Need of these Things? And would he have made you with these Needs of Meat, Drink, and Raiment, had he not likewise taken Care to supply them? What is House or Cloathing, if you look upon the curious Fabrick of your Body, which he hath reared? Or, what is Food, in Comparison of that noble Life, which you feel yourselves inspired with? Without all Controversy, he will never suffer you to want such small Things, who already has been so liberal in bestowing greater Benefits; especially since these greater Benefits cannot be supported without the other. Consider, as he adds, the Fowls of the Air: Because God has given them a Body, therefore he gives them Food, though they neither sow, nor reap, nor gather into Barns, to lay up Provision for themselves: Are ye not much better than they? Despair not then of his Providence: He will be so much the more careful of you, as you are better than Birds, and other such-like Creatures, who, without any Thought of their own, find every Thing, that is needful for them, ready at Hand."*

Let us look up to God again, as the *Ruler*, as well as *Benefactor*, the great *Disposer*, as well as *Provider*, for Mankind, and, under this View, we shall

shall perceive equal Reason to be easy and contented, in that our Affairs are lodged in the Hand of his *Providence*, which is much better and safer, than to have the Management of them in our own Power. We are apt to imagine, that, if God would give us Leave to carve out our own Condition, we could make a most admirable Provision for ourselves; that if we could gain such a Point, and compass such a Design, we should be made for ever; when alas! we never consider how many Inconveniencies would follow upon such a Supposition. The fair Appearances of Things invite us, and we are hurried on by a blind and eager Desire; but, whether we are able to manage our Choice, we are wholly ignorant. We never consider what *Dangers* and Difficulties we shall meet with, what *Snares* and Temptations lie in our Way; how our Humours and Passions are apt to vary with enlarged Circumstances, and what a great deal of *Circumspection* and Steadiness is necessary to secure our Virtue. So that, next to the Providence of God, we often owe our Safety to our *Impotence*, and are only happy, because we have it not in our Power, by changing our Fortune, to make ourselves *miserable*. One Man fancies, that, if he could but raise his Fortune to such a Pitch, no one could be happier than himself: But he does not seem to be aware, that many are Masters of much more than he desires, and yet are visibly uneasy and discontented. He never considers, that the Care of keeping, and the Desire of increasing Riches, does often so busy and perplex Mens Minds, that they have no Leisure to enjoy them. He never thinks how many false and *fantastical* Appetites they are apt to excite in us, and to create more Wants than they are able to satisfy; otherwise he would perceive, that the Happiness of a Man's Life consisteth not in the
Abundance

Abundance of the Things which he possesseth. Another imagines, that there is a strange Felicity lodged in *Authority*, and is mightily troubled to see himself shut out: "If he was once in Power, " if he had a publick Stage to act upon, he would " make an illustrious *Figure*, and rectify many of " those Disorders which disturb Society: But he " is so unfortunate as to be confined to a *private* " Station; he is buried in an obscure Retreat; " he has not Room enough to display his Parts " and Sufficiency; not Opportunities to shew the " Greatness and Generosity of his Mind." But were he sensible how dangerous a Thing it is to be great, how steep and slippery an elevated Station is, and how much it lies exposed to Malice and Envy, he would rather dread the *Precipice*, than be eager to climb the *Ascent*.

Since then the most tempting Conditions, that Men can propose to themselves, are so likely to make them unfortunate, is it not more prudent, as well as more pious, to resign up our Choice to the Providence of God; to acquiesce in his Disposal, and to think those Circumstances most proper, which he has placed us in? For, should God yield to the Importunity of our Complaints, his Favours might undo us, and, as the Heathen Poet observes, the Success and Grant of our Requests would prove our Ruin. 'Tis a very discreet Form of Prayer therefore, which one of the greatest of the Heathen Sages teaches us; "That God would " give us such Things as were convenient for us, " though we did not ask them; and deny us such " as were not, though we did." God has a perfect Knowledge of the Capacities and Inclinations of his Creatures, and what Effects every Condition will have upon them; he foresees what Miseries we shall be plunged into, if we are trusted to chuse for ourselves, what Rocks we should run upon, if

he allowed us to *steer* to our own Point; and therefore, in pure Mercy, restrains us from so dangerous a Freedom, denies us our fatal Wishes, and makes us happy against our Wills. Since then we are much more secure in God's Hands, than we are in our own, how unreasonable, how ungrateful must it be, to murmur at his *Allotment*, and be dissatisfied with the Results of his Wisdom, merely by adhering to our own vain Imaginations! Nay, how vain and ridiculous is it to oppose our Wishes to the Divine Counsels, and to fret and fume at That, which we can by no Means help: *For behold, God taketh away, says holy Job, and who can hinder him? Who will say unto him, what dost thou? If he will not withdraw his Anger, the proud Helpers do stoop under him: How much less shall I answer him, and chuse out my Words to reason with him? Whom, though I were righteous, I would not answer, but would make my Supplication to my Judge.* And this will lead us,

II. To cast our Eyes upon ourselves, and to reflect a little on our own particular Condition, in order to establish our Content. And, to this Purpose, let us, in the first Place, ask ourselves, *what are we? Creatures*, that are naturally indigent and impotent, that have no just Claim to any Thing, nor any Possession maintainable by our Power: All we have, or can have, comes from pure Courtesy and Bounty; and therefore, how little soever is allotted us, we have no Wrong done us, or any just Cause to complain. Nay, if we rightly survey ourselves, and take into our Account the Depravities of our Nature, as well as the Enormities of our Lives, we shall think any Thing good enough for us; and with all Humility confess, that *it is of the Lord's Mercies that we are not consumed, because his Compassions fail not.* For shall we, who are conscious to ourselves of so many
great

great Sins against our God, who, by wilful Transgressions, and slothful Neglects, have so much abused and affronted him; shall we, I say, affect to live in Ease, and swim in Plenty, and flourish in a brave and splendid Condition, when it is a Favour granted us, that we are permitted to subsist? It is not, surely, for such Persons to be dissatisfied with any Thing in this Life, but to bless God's exceeding Mercy, that we are still on this Side of the bottomless Pit. *I will bear the Indignation of the Lord* (says the Church, by the Mouth of the Prophet) *because I have sinned against him*; and much more then should we acknowledge the Righteousness of God in all his Dispensations, and account our Condition, though much more deplorable than it is, ten thousand times better *than our Iniquities deserve*.

For, indeed, what Condition can we figure to ourselves so wretched and deplorable, as not to have some Comforts to alleviate its Grievs, some Advantages to place in the contrary Scale against its Inconveniencies. Poverty indeed may, at first Sight, seem a very sore Evil; but, if we consider it a little more attentively, what is it, but the Absence of a few superfluous Things, which if we did not affect, we should not want; but, at the same Time, the Absence likewise of many Cares and Distractions, many Dangers, many Temptations, many Distempers both of Body and Soul, to which a plentiful and large Fortune is known to be exposed? 'Tis a State, which many have borne with great Chearfulness, which wise Men have voluntarily embraced, which the best Men have been known to endure, which God has expressed his Regard to, and which the Son of God has dignified by his Choice, and sanctified by his Participation; and can such a State countenance our Murmurings and Complaints? We have but a scanty Allowance

perhaps of the Necessaries of Life, but then we eat the homely Morsel we have with a good Appetite, and sleep, when we are weary, without Disturbance; for *the Sleep of a labouring Man is sweet, eat he little, or eat he much.* Together with our Poverty we have Health; and *Health, and a good Estate of Body, says the wise Hebrew, is above all Gold;* we have a quiet Mind, which all the Riches in the World are not to be compared with; a free Use of our Time, which the greatest *Minister of State* would be glad to taste of; and an un-sullied Reputation, which is more than can be obtained by the most splendid Fortune. Add to this, that our Conscience is easy, our Appetites within Rule, and our Faculties in their Vigour; that we have none of the Burthens, the Diseases, the Vices of Sloth and Luxury, and, if our Condition be really calamitous, seldom fail of the Compassion of Men, which is certainly much better, than that Envy, Ill-will, and Obloquy, which usually attend on Wealth and Prosperity.

These are some of the Things, that God has made the Blessings of a low Estate, and we do manifest Injustice to his Mercy and Goodness, when we overlook the comfortable Part, and fix our Attention upon nothing, but the Inconveniencies of it. For, suppose these Inconveniencies never so great, and ourselves sunk into the very *Abyss* of Calamities; yet, as there is no necessary Connection between the present and the future, who can tell, *what a Day may bring forth?* The same God, *who maketh sore, bindeth up, who weakeneth the Strength of the Mighty, raiseth the Poor out of the Dust, and lifteth the Needy out of the Dunghill, that he may set him with the Princes;* And, therefore, since nothing happens without his Determination; since he knows our Calamity, and, as it were, *sympathises* with us; above all, since we have

have his Promise, that he will provide for us in Want, comfort us in Trouble, and succour us in Distress, we have all imaginable Reason to hope for an Amendment of our Condition, when it is bad, rather than to fear a Continuance of it: For this is the wise Man's Remark upon the Matter, *the patient Man shall bear for a Time, and afterwards Joy shall spring up to him.*

But suppose, that the Providence of God, for sundry Reasons, thinks proper to continue our Calamities upon us, as long as we live; yet there is one comfortable Reflection still behind, *viz.* that Life itself cannot be long; 'tis but a *Vapour, that appeareth for a little Time, and then vanisheth away*; and, together with it, all our Sorrows and Complaints for ever: For Death (which may be very near, which cannot be far off) is a sure *Haven* from all the Tempests of Life, a safe *Refuge* from all the Persecutions of the World, and an infallible *Cure* for all the Diseases of our present Condition. It will enlarge us from all Restraints; it will ease us of all our Toils; veil all our Disgraces, stifle all our Cares, wipe all Tears from our Eyes, and banish all Sorrow from our Hearts. So that it is but persevering a little longer, and then all our Molestation will, of its own Accord, expire. In the mean Time, to allay the Uneasiness of our Minds, we should do well to reflect on the many inestimable Blessings we have in our Hands, which are above the Power of Affliction to extort from us: That we have still the Use of our Reason, which exceeds all the Treasures of the World; still the Comfort of a good Conscience; still Access to the Throne of Grace; still the Sense of the Divine Favour here, and the Expectation of the Divine Presence hereafter; and how can he be supposed to want any Thing, who, besides his present Interest in all the needful Effects of God's bounti-

ful Love, is an Heir of Heaven and everlasting Bliss ? And *who shall separate us from the Love of Christ*, says the Apostle ? *Shall Tribulation, or Distress, or Persecution, or Famine, or Nakedness, or Peril, or Sword ?* All these he despises, because he was very well persuaded, *That the Sufferings of this present Time are not worthy to be compared with the Glories, which shall be revealed to us.*

III. Another Expedient to settle in our Minds a Spirit of Contentment, is frequently to cast our Eyes *upon others*, and compare our Condition with theirs. The Rule, which *Seneca* lays down for this Purpose, is a very good one : *When thou beholdest how many there are before thee, look back, says he, and see how many there are, that follow behind thee ;* but the Mischief is, that Men will never hearken to this Rule. They see a long Train perhaps of Persons, that march before them, finely attired, stately mounted, and adorned with all the Bravery of Fortune, and these they gaze on : They admire the Lustre of their Condition ; they sigh to think, that they cannot come up with them ; and pine away, in the Midst of many Blessings, because they are forced to follow at some Distance. Whereas, if they would now and then cast their Eyes behind them, they would behold so many consuming their Lives in perpetual Toil and Drudgery, merely to obtain a short hungry Meal, and a few Hours Sleep and Insensibility ; so many oppressed with Slavery, harrassed with Cruelty, pining with Want and Poverty, overwhelmed with Shame and Infamy ; so many wasted with long Sickneses, out-worn with lingering Pains, consumed with Sorrow and Anxiety of Soul ; and, (what is worst of all) so many stung with Remorse, racked with Horror and Despair, and alarmed with perpetual Fears and dismal Expectations ; that they would soon think themselves among the foremost Persons ;

sons : " For he that will enjoy Tranquillity of
" Mind, must, in *Prosperity*, consider how many
" there are, that enjoy *less Good*, and, in *Adver-*
" *sity*, how many there are, that suffer *more Evil*."

In making Comparisons then between ourselves and others, there are these Rules that must direct our Proceeding : 1. That we compare ourselves with all Men, and not only with some few. 2. That we compare ourselves with them in all Things, and not merely in some Particulars. And, 3. That we compare ourselves with them at all Times, and not only at some certain Seasons.

Upon these Conditions, we may venture to look even into the Palaces of Princes, and make an Estimate between our Condition, and that of those, whom we are apt so much to admire and envy. For what indeed is the State and Condition of the greatest Persons upon Earth, but a State of pompous Trouble, and gay Servility ; of living in continual Noise and Stir, surrounded with Crowds, and subjected to the Tediousness of Ceremony ; a State, that wants all the solid Comforts of Life, true Friendship, free Conversation, certain Leisure, Privacy and Retirement, to enjoy ourselves, our Time and Thoughts, when and how we please ; and yet a State, encompassed with Snares and Temptations numberless, which, without extreme Caution and Constancy, Force of Reason, and Command of all Appetites and Passions, cannot be avoided ? This, and no better, is the State of the Great ; and therefore the Psalmist has justly observed, that *as Men of low Degree are Vanity* ; so *Men of high Degree are a Lye* : A Lye, because their State cheateth us, by appearing so very specious, which, when nearer inspected, is found to be so beset with Troubles and Dangers on every Side, that we have Reason to bless God for appointing us a private Station, and to pity those

Kings and sovereign Princes, on whom he has laid the Burthen of a Crown.

But, if we stretch the Comparifon beyond our *Contemporaries*, and look back to the *Generations* of old, we shall have ftill farther Cause to acknowledge God's great Indulgence to us, confidering what has commonly been the Lot of good Men in all Ages. What the feveral Forefathers of our Faith, before Chrift's Incarnation, underwent, the Author to the *Hebrews* has given us a brief but very full Compendium : *They had Trial of cruel Mockings and Scourgings ; yea, moreover, of Bonds and Imprifonments : They were stoned, were fawn afunder, were tempted, were flain with the Sword : They wandered about in Sheep-fkins and Goat-fkins, being deftitute, afflicted, tormented : They wandered in Defarts, and in Mountains, and in Dens, and in Caves of the Earth.* And, if we look on the *primitive* Chriftians, we fhall foon perceive that their Privileges confifted not in any Immunities from Calamities, for their whole Lives were Scenes of Sufferings. St. Paul has given us an Account of his own ; *in Labours more abundant, in Stripes above Meafure, in Prifons more frequent, in Deaths often. Of the Jews five Times received I forty Stripes fave one : Thrice was I beaten with Rods ; once was I stoned ; thrice I fuffered Shipwreck ; a Night and a Day have I been in the Deep. In Journeyings often, &c.* And, if his fingle Hardfhips rofe thus high, what may we think the whole Sum of all his *Fellow-labourers* amounted to together, with that whole *Army of Martyrs* that fealed their Faith with their Blood, of whole Sufferings the History of the Church gives us fuch astonishing Relations.

And now, *being compaffed about with fo great a Cloud of Witneffes*, the Apoftle's Inference is irrefragable ; *let us run with Patience the Race that is fet before us ; but ftill it is more fo, if we proceed to the Confideration*

deration which he adjoins; *looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our Faith, who, for the Joy that was set before him, endured the Cross, despising the Shame.* And, indeed, if we contemplate him in the whole Course of his Life, we shall find him rightly stiled, by the Prophet, *a Man of Sorrows*, since there is scarce any Calamity incident to human Nature that was not tried and exemplified in him. Does any complain of the Lowness and Poverty of his Condition? His whole Life was a State of Indigence; and, as he was forced to take up his Lodging with Beasts at his Birth, so he afterwards assures us, that he *had not a Place wherein to lay his Head.* Is any oppressed with Infamy and Reproach? He may find his Saviour accused as a *Glutton, a Wine-bibber, a Blasphemer, a Sorcerer*; and a common Thief and Murderer preferred before him. Is any one despised and deserted by his Friends? He was contemned by his Countrymen, betrayed by one of his Disciples, and abandoned by all, unless by that one who followed him the longest, to renounce him more shamefully, by a solemn Abjuration. And, lastly, does any Man groan under sharp and acute Pains of Body? Let him attend his Saviour through all the Stages of his dreadful Passion, from his *Agony* in the Garden to his Expiration on the *Cross*, and so he will perceive the Demand of the mournful Prophet, in the Person of the crucified Jesus, verified to the full; *Behold and see if there be any Sorrow like unto my Sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me, in the Day of his fierce Anger: And therefore consider him, as the Apostle advises, who endured such Contradiction of Sinners against himself, lest ye be weary and faint in your Minds.* Set the Example of his Meekness and Equanimity before you, confront your petty Uneasinesses with his unspeakable Sufferings, and then it will be impos-

fible

fible but that your Admiration will silence your Impatiences, and shame you for ever out of your Repinings.

“ For why should I repine, or be discontented
 “ with my Condition, *may every considerate Chris-*
 “ *tian say*, when I am under the Providence and
 “ Protection of a gracious God ? He hath placed
 “ me, indeed, in a low Station of Life ; but then
 “ he hath secured me from the Danger of *falling*,
 “ and blessed me with Repose and Tranquillity of
 “ Mind, which Persons of an high Degree and
 “ Eminence are not acquainted with. He hath
 “ given me the Possession of no Estate, transmit-
 “ ted from my Ancestors ; but then he hath given
 “ me Strength of Body, that inables me to main-
 “ tain myself and Family by my daily Labour, or
 “ such Endowments of Mind as qualify me to do
 “ it in a more *liberal* Way. At present, indeed,
 “ I labour under a distressed Fortune ; but then
 “ I have good Reason to hope that some lucky
 “ Turn will happen to my Affairs, that, by the
 “ Intervention of good Friends, or the Success of
 “ my honest Endeavours, God, *who lifteth the*
 “ *Simple out of the Dust, and the Poor out of the*
 “ *Mire*, will extricate me from these Difficulties.
 “ But, if this should not be, in all Probability
 “ these Difficulties cannot last long, because Life
 “ itself is not long ; and, together with Life, all
 “ the Miseries and Calamities of it are at an End,
 “ and then I shall be as though I had never suf-
 “ fered any Thing, only that I shall reap the Be-
 “ nefit of my Sufferings when Time shall be no
 “ more. In the mean Season, I have many ines-
 “ timable Benefits which the Great and Opulent
 “ want ; a sound Constitution, sound Sleep, and
 “ no Want of Appetite to relish my homely Mor-
 “ sel : For, though my Allowance be both mean
 “ and small, yet Nature, I find, is satisfied with a
 “ little,

“ little, and that little (when I look upon myself
 “ as a Creature that hath a Title to nothing, and
 “ as a *Sinner*, that hath a Title to Destruction
 “ only) is certainly much more than I can any
 “ Way pretend to deserve. Nay, if I look upon
 “ others, how tolerable is my Condition, in Com-
 “ parison of many of my *Contemporaries*, who are
 “ below me considerably in Fortune, in Parts, in
 “ Health, in Happiness of most Kinds, and yet
 “ may have better Pretensions to the Divine Fa-
 “ vour than I; in Comparison of *many faithful*
 “ *Servants* of God, who have been as remarkable
 “ for their Sufferings as they have been for their
 “ Piety; the *Patriarchs* and *Prophets*, the *Apostles*
 “ and first *Christians*, especially the Son of God
 “ himself, when he came into the World to re-
 “ deem me: And shall I repine at any Thing,
 “ when my gracious Saviour underwent worse?
 “ Or murmur against Providence, for placing
 “ me in the Condition which he, by his volun-
 “ tary Assumption and patient Continuance in,
 “ has both recommended and sanctified? It will
 “ be the Height of Folly, as well as Confidence,
 “ to expect to fare better, in this *Valley of Tears*,
 “ than did the Son of God, when he was pleased
 “ to sojourn in it; especially considering, that my
 “ Discontentedness will avail me nothing, my
 “ loudest Complaints will never prevail with Hea-
 “ ven to alter one Decree; whereas my bearing
 “ my Calamities willingly and well *will be a Spec-*
 “ *tacle grateful to God*, and, besides rebating the
 “ Sting of what I suffer, will probably prevail
 “ with him to release me from it: And, there-
 “ fore, being sensible in whom I have put my
 “ Confidence, *even in him who is able to do abun-*
 “ *dantly above all that I can ask or think*, I will
 “ *be careful for nothing, but in every Thing, by*
 “ Prayer

*“ Prayer and Supplication, with Thanksgiving, let
 “ my Requests be made known unto God.”*

SECT. II.

Of the Government of the Tongue.

ST James, treating on this very Subject, with great Variety of Arguments endeavours to shew how difficult a Province it is for any Man to govern his Tongue. Every Kind of Beasts, says he, and of Birds, and of Serpents, and Things in the Sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of Mankind; but the Tongue can no Man tame: It is an unruly Evil, full of deadly Poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father, and therewith curse we Men, which are made after the Similitude of God; out of the same Mouth proceedeth Blessing and Cursing: My Brethren, these Things ought not to be so: For doth a Fountain send forth, at the same Place, sweet Water and bitter? The Untameableness of the Tongue must be understood in a limited Sense, to denote the great Difficulty of it; that the Thing is possible the same Apostle seems to intimate, when, in the Beginning of his Discourse, he tells us, that, if any Man offend not in Word, the same is a perfect Man, i. e. one of a singular Worth and Integrity; and such an one, he presumes, has as much Command over his Tongue as he that manages the *Bit* has over the *Horse* he rides; or he that holds the *Helm* has over the *Ship* he steers: And, how far an hearty Purpose and Resolution may carry us in the Execution of this great Task, the Example of the Royal Psalmist seems to instruct us: *I said I will take Heed to my Ways, that I offend not with my Tongue; I will keep my Mouth as it were with a Bridle,*

Bridle, while the Ungodly is in my Sight : For I am utterly purposed that my Mouth shall not offend.

What makes the Difficulty of this Regimen then is, in some Part, imputable to the Member itself. The Tongue is so slippery that it easily deceives an heedless Guard ; for Nature seems to have given it some unhappy Advantages that Way. It is in its *Make* the most ready for Motion of any Member ; it needs not so much as the Flexure of a Joint to make it go ; and, by Access of Humours, acquires a certain *Glibness*, the more to facilitate its moving, by which Means it comes to pass that it often goes without giving us Warning. And as Children, when they happen upon a *rolling Engine*, can set it in such a Career as wiser People cannot on a sudden stop ; so the childish Parts of us, our Passions, our Fancies, and other our animal Faculties, can put our Tongues into such Disorders as the Aids of our Reason cannot easily rectify : Since the Tongue then is so very loose and versatile a Member that the least Breath of Thought can stir it, and set it on going any Way, it cannot but need much Attention of Mind, either to keep it in a steady Rest or in a right Motion ; and, since numberless Swarms of Things are continually roving in the Fancy, and thence incessantly obtruding themselves upon the Tongue, great Judgment and Circumspection is certainly requisite to remark their Quality, as they call upon us to utter them, and, out of the promiscuous Crowd that come, to select the few only that our Reason and Religion pronounce to be good, and proper to be spoken ; which may be reduced to these three Heads : 1. Such as are holy and religious, with relation to God. 2. Sincere and inoffensive, with regard to our Neighbour. And, 3. Modest and decent, with respect to ourselves.

I. The

I. The Duty, the Reasonableness, and Excellency of religious Discourse in common Conversation, is what we took Occasion to consider elsewhere; and therefore on this Head shall need only to enquire a little into the Folly and Wickedness of that Blasphemy and Profaneness, so popular in this Age, which *sets its Mouth against the Heavens*, and manifestly opposes the Caution and strict *Holiness*, which the Apostle prescribes us in *all Manner of Conversation*.

How transient soever we may suppose our Words to be, yet, if there be a Supreme Being, which we call God, there is sufficient Reason to believe, that he, as well as Man, is provoked as much, nay, more, by our Words, than by our Deeds. Our ill Deeds may be done upon the vehement Impulse of some Temptations: Some Profit or Pleasure may transport and hurry us on to the Commission; at least, they may have this Alleviation, that we did them to please, or advantage ourselves, and not to displease God: But profane and atheistical Discourse cannot be so palliated. It is an *Arrow* shot directly against Heaven, and out of no other *Quiver*, but that of *Malice*: And, if Malice among Men be an Aggravation of Injuries, how much more so must it be, in the Esteem of God, whose principal Demand is, that *we should give him our Heart*. 'Till therefore we can prove (against the Voice of Nature, and Faith of History; against the settled Judgment of wise and sober Persons, who have studied and considered the Point; and against the current Tradition of all Ages, and general Consent of Mankind, which is a difficult Task to do) that there is no God; 'twill be too bold an Advance for us, in this Manner, to dare and defy him, lest we find him, at last, asserting his *Being* in our utter Destruction and Confusion.

In

In the mean Time, it would much better become us soberly to balance with ourselves the Gains we may expect, and the Hazards we too probably run, by indulging this profane Liberty of Speech.

We cannot pretend to give Pleasure to our Hearers, for our Hearers are generally of a different Opinion : They are convinced of the Existence of a God, and therefore think themselves affronted ; look upon it as an injurious Reflection upon their Judgment and Choice, and resent the Indignity with Detestation, when they hear their best Friend, and only Benefactor, the Author of their Beings, and the Founder of their Hopes, traduced and vilified. We cannot pretend to advantage the *Publick*, because the Publick is fully satisfied, that the Belief of a God, and a future State, is the best Security of *civil Society*, and, consequently, cannot but suppose, that whoever goes about to dispossess the World of this Persuasion, deserves to be reputed an Enemy to Mankind, and an injurious Disturber of their Tranquillity.

And now, what a desperate Madness is this, merely for the Sake of daring to do, what every sober Man would tremble to attempt, to make Shipwreck of our immortal Souls ; to expose ourselves to endless Wailings and Woe, only to raise a Fit of present Laughter, and, in order to be reckoned *Wits*, to prove ourselves stark wild. For, of such *Laughter*, we may very well say, with the wise Man, *that it is Madness*, and of such *Mirth*, *what does it do ?* What does it do indeed, but only provoke God, in his Turn, *to laugh at our Calamity, and to mock when our Fear cometh ; when our Fear cometh as Desolation, and our Destruction cometh as a Whirlwind ?*

Another Thing, opposite to religious and holy Conversation, is making his Word the Subject of our profane Mirth and Drollery : For it is no uncommon

uncommon Thing to hear Persons, almost in all Company, using the Scripture, as they do Ends of *Plays*, to furnishing out their *Jests*; cloathing all their little Conceits in its Language, and debasing it by the Mixture of such miserable *Trifles*, as themselves would be ashamed of, were they not heightened and inspirited by that Profaneness. But, to discern how God will resent such Usage of his most sacred Word, let but any of us put the Case in our own Persons. Suppose we had written to a Friend, to advertise him of Things of the greatest Importance to himself; had given him ample and exact Instructions, backed with the most earnest Exhortations, and enforced with the most moving Expressions of Kindness and Tenderneſs to him; and the next News, we should hear of that Letter, were to have it put in *doggrel Rhime*, to be made Sport for the Rabble, or, at the best, to have the most eminent Phrases of it picked out to be made a common By-word; I would fain know how any of us would resent such a Mixture of Ingratitude and Contumely. There needs no minute Application, I think. The whole Design of the Bible does sufficiently answer, nay, infinitely surpass the former Part of the Parallel; and God knows our vile Usage of it does too much, I fear too literally, adopt the latter. And, if we think the Affront too base for one of us, can we believe God will take it in good Part? The Words of the Apostle (and terrible Words they are) denote the very contrary: *If the Word spoken by Angels, says he, was steadfast, and every Transgression and Disobedience received a just Recompence; how shall we escape, if we neglect, if we burlesque, and make a mere Jest of, so great Salvation, which at the first began to be spoken to us by the Lord?*

II. With Regard to our Neighbour, the Duty of governing our Tongue will consist in the Sincerity and Inoffensiveness

Inoffensiveness of our Words and Expressions. St Paul, after the usual Introduction to most of his Epistles, begins That to the *Philippians* with a solemn Prayer to God, *that they might approve Things, that were excellent, and be sincere, and without Offence, till the Day of Christ*; and, in That to the *Ephesians*, he gives them strict Charge, that, *putting away Lying, they should speak every Man Truth with his Neighbour*; which he enforces with this Reason, *for we are Members one of another, i. e.* as we are Members of one common Society, we are severally, in our different Capacities, obliged to promote the common Good and Happiness of it: But now, Speech being the proper Instrument of our consulting and providing for these great Ends, all *Insincerity* and *equivocal* Abuse of Words at once tend to destroy the natural Order, and fundamental Rights of Society, and are directly contrary to the true Use of Speech in its original Institution.

Few Persons, indeed, have the Effrontery to affirm what is directly false, what they know to be so, and may easily be detected in: The worst of Men desire to preserve some Kind of Reputation in the World, and they observe, that there is no Character more infamous, than That of a *Liar*. They are cautious therefore how they assert Things, which have no real or probable Foundation, not out of Regard to Truth, considered as a *moral* Virtue, but as an Ornament of *civil* Life: Yet there are so many Ways of misrepresenting Facts really true in themselves, of amplifying or suppressing the Circumstances wherewith they are attended, and of supposing This and That, in order to set them off in different Colours; that Men of a fertile Invention may easily find Means, on certain Occasions, of imposing upon the *Credulity* of others, without any scandalous Consequences in Prejudice

of their Reputation; and all this may be thought necessary to such as propose to live in the World, especially if they would raise themselves to any publick or eminent Station. It shews, however, that the Maxims, whereby Men govern themselves, who resolve to make a Fortune at any Rate, are sometimes opposite to those of Religion; and, for that very Reason, Persons, that make Profession of Religion, cannot, without evidently opposing it, pretend to justify such Maxims, or to act upon them.

The like may be said of Professions of Kindness, that are not *real*, as well as Commendations and Praises, that are not due: Though both these may, in some Measure, be apologised for; *the one*, as necessary to keep up the Dependencies of great Men, and to give them an higher Air of Dignity and Power; *the other*, to preserve the Favour of the *Proud*, and to make us as well thought on, where we are dependent; yet they are far from being an Imitation of the true Disciples of Christ, who made it their great Joy and *Triumph*, not how *artfully* they had conducted themselves; not what exquisite Masters of Disguise and Dissimulation they had been; but *that with Simplicity and godly Sincerity, not with fleshly Wisdom, but by the Grace of God, they had their Conversation in the World*. This, however, is not so to be understood, as if a *Courtesy* to our Benefactors, or all *Reserve* to such as are our Enemies, were to be superseded: There is a wide Difference between Civility and Flattery, between Caution and Dissimulation; and our blessed Saviour, by qualifying the *Simplicity* of the *Dove* with the *Wisdom* of the *Serpent*, has plainly instructed us, that *Candour* is not only very reconcileable with *Prudence*, but ought indeed never to be separated from it.

With

With *Regard to our Neighbour*, another Duty, in the Government of the Tongue, is to have our Conversation *innocent* and inoffensive, free from that *Calumny* and Defamation, whereby we injure his good Name, (which is an Argument we have spoken to before) as well as that *Censoriousness* and *Contumely*, which we now come to consider.

Wonderful is the Care, which the Christian Religion has taken, to correct the Vice of *censuring* and judging others, as knowing it to be one of the most mischievous, and withal the most predominant Vices in the World. Sometimes we find it represented, as a bold and unjust Usurpation of an Authority, that by no Means belongs to us: *Speak not evil one of another*, says St James; *he that speaketh evil of his Brother, and judgeth his Brother, speaketh evil of the Law, and judgeth the Law: There is one Law-giver, who is able to save, and to destroy; who art thou that judgest another?* Sometimes we find it represented, as an insufferable Incroachment upon the independent Freedom of our Brethren: *For why is my Liberty judged*, says St Paul, speaking of Things of an *indifferent Nature, of another Man's Conscience?* *Every one of us shall give an Account of himself to God; let us not therefore judge another any more.* Sometimes again we find it represented, as a Practice of very mischievous Consequence; as it disturbs the Quiet and Comfort of Society, and commits irreparable Outrages upon the Reputation of innocent Persons: Hence we are told, that *the Whisperer separateth chief Friends*; that *the Mouth that slandereth, slayeth the Soul*; that *the Words of such Men are Wounds*; and that *he, who scatters them, and says, I am in Sport, is as a Mad-man, that casteth about Firebrands, and Arrows, and Death.*

But if the Reverence due to Almighty God will not restrain us from assuming his Right to Judica-

ture ; if the Evils, that follow this wicked Disposition and Practice, will not prevail with us to refrain from all censorious Speeches ; yet Regard to ourselves, one would think, should not fail to work upon us ; and therefore our holy Religion supplies us with this Argument likewise : *Judge not, and ye shall not be judged ; condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned ; forgive, and ye shall be forgiven ; for with the same Measure Men mete withal, it shall be measured to them again.* They who put themselves forward, and are very severe in censuring their Neighbours, take a most effectual Course to prepare a Scourge for their own Backs ; and in a very literal Sense procure, and lay up for themselves, *good Measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over* ; for the World is seldom behind-hand in such *Retaliations* : Whereas the Man of Discretion and Reserve, that asperses no-body, nor intermeddles with Matters that concern him not ; that puts the best Construction upon every Thing, and allows all People their due Commendation ; is much more safe from the Lash of ill Tongues, and bespeaks the Justice and favourable Treatment of all that know him. So very malicious is the World indeed, that even this Man must not flatter himself with a total Exemption from Censure and Misrepresentation ; but still he has this Advantage, that, when Obloquy and Detraction attempt upon his Honour, the Slander is scattered with less *Bitterness*, received with less *Delight*, and suffered with less *Regret* and Self-reproach, than it must needs be, where a Man's own Conscience tells him, that he hath given others just Provocation to make *Reprisals* upon his good Name, and, by his own hard Dealing, has deserved to be treated as a common Enemy.

But 'tis not by Men only, that he may expect to be thus treated ; even God, the Judge of all,
has

has expressly threatened, that *he shall have Judgment without Mercy, who hath shewed no Mercy.* And this is surely Discouragement and Terror enough, in all Conscience, to consider, that, by giving a Loose to a Licentiousness of Tongue, we must expect to find no more Kindness from God, than Men have found from us; and yet, if God enter into Judgment with his Servants, no *Flesh living can be justified in his Sight*; or, if he will be extreme to mark what is done amiss, where is the Man able to abide it? Least of all are those Men qualified to abide it, whose critical Observation, and inhuman Exposing of other People, so hinders them from examining into their own State and Condition, that, while they are pulling out *Motes from their Brother's Eye*, they perceive not the *Beam that is in their own*, though never so gross and visible.

That therefore we may preserve ourselves against so common and so pernicious a Sin, let us often reflect upon the Words of the Apostle; *Thou art inexcusable, O Man, whosoever thou art, that judgest; for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou, that judgest, dost the same Things*, or perhaps worse: And in the Strength of this, whenever we find ourselves, upon any Misdemeanour of our Brother, ready to mount the Tribunal, and pronounce our Sentence; let us first consider how competent we are for the Office, and call to our Remembrance the Decision of Christ, once made in the like Case; *he that is without Sin, let him first cast a Stone*: To the same Purpose, it will be highly requisite, that we frequently and seriously contemplate the Last and Great Judgment, and then we may ask ourselves, as St. Paul does, *Why dost thou judge thy Brother; or, why dost thou set at nought thy Brother!* We shall all stand before the *Judgment-Seat of Christ*. Then will come the great Day of Revelation and Retribution, and we are not to

anticipate it by our private *Inquests* or Sentences. Our own Accounts are Business enough for us to get ready against that Day : And as it would be a spiteful Folly for Malefactors, that are going to the *Bar*, to spend their Time in exaggerating one another's Crimes ; so surely it is for us, who are all going toward the dreadful Tribunal, to be drawing up Charges against one another. But, if we must needs be talking of other People's Faults, let it not be to *defame*, but to *amend* them, by converting our Detraction and Censoriousness into fraternal Admonition and Reproof ; *exhorting one another daily, while it is called To-day, lest any of us be hardened through the Deceitfulness of Sin* ; and, *if any one be overtaken in a Fault, restoring such a one in the Spirit of Meekness, considering ourselves, lest we also be tempted.*

Once more, *with Regard to our Neighbour* : Another Breach upon the *Innocence* and Inoffensiveness of Conversation, is Scoffing and Derision, what the Scripture expresses, as I suppose, by *foolish Talking and jesting*, which are not convenient. We mightily mistake the Spirit of Christianity, if we imagine, that it was ever designed to debar us from any *innocent*, much less from any *useful* Pleasure, that human Life requires : God certainly has not been more rigid to our Minds, than he has to our Bodies ; and therefore, as he has not so devoted the one to Toil, but that he allows us some Time to exercise them in Recreations, as well as Labours ; so doubtless he indulges the same *Relaxation* to the other, which are not always to be screwed up to the Height, but allowed sometimes to descend to those Easinesses of Converse, which entertain the lower Faculties of the Soul. If then our gay and jocular Discourse may serve to any Purposes of this Kind ; if it has a Tendency to raise our drooping Spirits, to allay our Cares, and recreate our
Minds,

Minds, when tired with graver Occupations, if it any Way occasions Alacrity, or maintains good Humour; endears Society, or sweetens Conversation; it is plainly neither inconvenient, nor unprofitable, and, consequently, is not that Kind of *Jesting*, which the Apostle condemns. The Holy Scripture is very remarkable for its great Gravity and Seriousness of Expression, and yet, for some particular Purposes, such as reproving Vices, and reclaiming Persons, that are too absurd for any solemn Confutation, we find it employing a Spirit of Facetiousness, and dressing up what it means to explode, in a very ludicrous and *satyrical* Manner. Thus, of the foolish and besotted Priests of *Baal*, it is recorded, that *Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud; for he is a God, either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a Journey, or peradventure he sleeps, and must be awaked*: And of those other ridiculous Sinners, the Worshipers of carved Images, no Man can speak in finer Raillery, than does the Prophet *Isaiab*; *He planteth an Ash, says he, speaking of one of them, and the Rain doth nourish it: He burneth Part thereof in the Fire; with Part thereof he eateth Flesh: He roasteth Roast, and is satisfied; yea, he warmeth himself, and saith, Aha! I am warm; I have seen the Fire: And the Residue thereof he maketh a God, even his graven Image: He falleth down unto it, and worshippeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, deliver me, for thou art my God.*

Since then it is apparent, from those and other Passages of Scripture, that a certain Vivacity and Sportfulness of Wit, in many Cases, is allowable, and, in some, is necessary, to expose such Errors, as neither deserve, nor can well bear a serious Confutation; the Apostle's Meaning must be restrained, either to such *Jesting*, as makes Sport and Mockery of the most sacred Things, (which is an Abuse of Speech considered before) or such severe

and satyrical *Jesting*, as tends to the Disgrace and Prejudice of our Neighbour, the more of Wit and Poignancy there is in it. A dull Contumely, indeed, quickly vanishes, because no-body thinks it worth his remembering; but when it is steeled with *Wit*, and Sprightliness of Imagination, it pierces deep, and leaves such Impressions in the Fancy of the Hearers, that thereby it gets rooting in the Memory, and will hardly ever be forgot; And as Wit gives an Edge, so it also adds Wings to the Abuse, and makes it fly abroad in an Instant. The Jest recommends the *Defamation*, and is commonly so incorporated with it, that they cannot be related apart: From whence it comes to pass, that even those, who like it not in one Respect, are, many Times, so transported with it in the other, that they chuse rather to propagate the *Contumely* than to stifle the *Conceit*. By this Means a Man, for what perhaps is none of his Fault, his *natural* or *moral* Infirmities, or some accidental Singularities of Humour or Temper, or the like, shall be exposed to the Scorn and Contempt, not of his own Generation only, but sometimes of his latest Posterity, it being no unusual Thing to have *Sarcasms* of Wit transmitted to Story. But now, what an inhuman Thing is this, to make the Weaknesses of Men the Subject of our Mirth; which, considering whence they come, and how common they are in most of us, do deserve our *Compassion*, not our *Severity*, and are rather to be *deplored* secretly, than openly *derided*!

The *Heart of Fools*, says the wise Man, *is in the House of Mirth*, meaning such Mirth, as affects to raise an Admiration of its Wit from ignominious Reflections on the Persons and Actions of others; because, in another Place, he declares, that *it is a Sport to a Fool to do Mischief*. And, indeed, what can be a greater Instance of Folly, than, for such
mean

mean Ends, to do so great Harm ; to lose Friends, and get Enemies for a Conceit ; and, out of a light Humour, to provoke fierce Wrath and lasting Hatred. For this daily Experience verifies, that nothing does so speedily inflame, and so thoroughly enrage Mens Passions, as such Scoffs and Invec-tives, as are *sharper than Swords*. In the mean Time, the Scoffer fails in his main Pretence, and cannot, with Reason, claim an Interest in Wit ; since he manifestly discovers a great Straitness and Sterility of good Invention, who cannot, in all the wide Field of Things, find better Subjects of Dis-course ; who knows not how to be ingenious with-in reasonable Compass ; but, to pick up a sorry Conceit, is forced to make Excursions beyond the Bounds of Honesty and Decency ; and, if the Word of God be true, into the very Confines of Destruction and Death, since *Judgments are pre-pared for Scorners, and Stripes for the Backs of Fools*.

The Purpose of all this is, to engage Men of Wit and Ingenuity, who place much of their Dex-terity, and some Part of their Pride, in the Art of scoffing and ridiculing others, to weigh soberly and seriously the Account they must one Day give, of the Employment of their Parts ; and the more they have hitherto embezzled them, the more to expiate that *Unthriftiness*, by a wiser and more careful Managery for the future ; and so, instead of that vain, empty, and vanishing Mirth, they have courted *here*, they may find a full and eternal Satisfaction in the Joy of their Lord *hereafter*.

III. *With Respect to ourselves*, the Duty of go-vernning our Tongues consists in the *Modesty* and *Decency* of our Words and Expressions, to which all Boasting and Ostentation, all Positiveness and Obscenity of Speech are directly opposite. If we look into the Family of *Boasters*, we shall soon perceive

perceive the Subjects of their Ostentation are, either some *natural* Excellencies, such as Beauty or Wit; or some *accidental* Acquisitions, such as Honour and Wealth, &c. but, since God is manifestly the Author and Giver of all these, the Foundation of our *glorying* in them is utterly taken away. No Man can suppose himself to be his own *Creator*; and, though some have assumed to be the Makers of their own Fortunes, yet the frequent Defeats of Mens Industry and Contrivance do sufficiently confute the bold Pretence, and give them to understand, that there is a Divine Providence above them, which can either blast or prosper their Attempts. The Piety of some is another Article of their Ostentation: But, as this is less owing to ourselves than any Endowment of Nature, so, when once it begins to be boasted of, it is utterly blasted, and becomes insignificant: For, even of the most Christian Actions, such as Prayer, Alms, and Fasting, our Saviour has told us, that, when they are done *to be seen of Men*, and with a Design to catch at their Applause, that is all the Reward they are likely to have: Nay, that is a Reward which they frequently miss of too, since Vanity quite drowns the Notice of the Things on which it is founded; and, as common Experience shews, Men are not so apt to say, "such a Person is handsome, wise, or good, as that he is proud upon the Conceit of being so." In a Word, he that celebrates his own Excellencies must be content with his own Applauses; for he will get none of others, unless it be from those fawning *Sycophants*, whose Praises are worse than the bitterest Detraction.

Thus foolish a Sin is Ostentation, that it effectually undermines and supplants itself: It is Glory that it seeks, and yet, instead of gaining that, it loses common and ordinary Estimation. It has a strange
Ambition

Ambition to be *popular*, and yet nothing makes a Man so despicable, and useless in the World. To do him a Kindness most Men are loth, because they foresee he will arrogate it to himself, as the Effect of his Merit; to receive one from him, none, that are not in the greatest Exigence, are willing, because they know it is not only sure to be proclaimed, but magnified much above its true Worth. He is excluded therefore from all Commerce in Life, and seems only of Use to give Sport to his Company; which, by suggesting some Hints, and now and then shewing a Nod or Smile of Approbation, can make him display himself more disadvantageously, more ridiculously, than the most satyrical Character could possibly do.

In the mean Time, though he goes on at this foolish Rate, yet, according to *Solomon's* Observation, this Distemper of his precludes all Means of his growing wiser: For *seest thou a Man wise in his own Conceit? There is more Hope of a Fool, than of him*; and the Reason is evident, because he discards the two great Instruments of Instruction, *Admonition* and *Observation*. The former he thinks superseded by his own Perfections, and the latter he circumscribes within himself; and yet, even here, instead of making Enquiry into his Faults and Defects, he fixes his Contemplation only on his more splendid Qualities, with which he is so dazzled, that, when you bring him to the darker Parts of himself, it fares with him, as with those, that come from newly gazing on the Sun, *he can see nothing*.

To cure the Imposthumation in our Minds then, which occasions this vain Ostentation of our Tongue, a good Way will be, to put ourselves under the Course, which the Apostle prescribes, *to look not every Man on his own Things, but every Man also on the Things of others, i. e.* to observe

the Good, that is visible in every Man, and, when we find ourselves inclined to be proud and conceited, to remember how many have excelled us in true Merit: Or, if we must needs be looking into ourselves, to take a full and just Survey of all; to estimate our Sins, as well as Virtues; and so considering, how many and heinous are the one, as well as how few and defective are the other, instead of the proud *Pharisee's*, Lord, *I thank thee, that I am not as other Men are*, we shall be led, with the humble *Publican*, to *smite our Breasts*, and say, Lord, *be merciful to me, a Sinner*.

Another Breach upon the *Modesty* and Decency of Conversation (for it will not be expected, I hope, that I should enlarge upon that which, the Apostle tells us, *should not so much as once be named among Christians*) is a certain *Peremptoriness* in Discourse, which consists either in a *magisterial* Manner of dictating *Matters of Opinion*, or in a *positive* Manner of averring *Matters of Fact*. Now, besides that the former of these is a manifest Incroachment upon the common Birthright of Mankind, who have, every one of them, a Liberty of thinking and judging according to their own Understandings, there is this manifest Incongruity attending it, that no Man can be positively assured whether what he dictates so confidently be, in Reality, Truth, or no: For *the Thoughts of mortal Men*, says the wise Hebrew, *are miserable, and our Devices are but uncertain*. For *the corruptible Body presses down the Soul, and the earthly Tabernacle weigheth down the Mind, that miseth upon many Things; and hardly do we guess aright at Things that are upon Earth, and with Labour do we find the Things that are before us, but the Things that are in Heaven, and of difficult and abstruse Speculation, who hath searched out?* And, if so, it is Pride and Presumption to impose mere Conjectures for infallible Oracles upon other
Mens

Mens Judgments; for, *who made thee to differ from another?* “ Since God has made *Rationality* the common Portion of Mankind, how came it to be thy Inclosure? Or what Signature has he set upon thy Understanding, what Mark of Excellence, that it should be *paramount?*” The great Misfortune is, that Men of this sanguine Complexion, in relation to their own Sentiments, are generally made up of Pride and Ignorance, which, of all others, is the most unhappy Composition. For Ignorance, being of itself like stiff Clay, when once Pride comes to scorch and harden it, grows perfectly impenetrable: And accordingly we may observe, that none are so obstinate and unconvincible as *half-witted* People, who know just enough to excite their Pride, but not so much as to cure their Ignorance. But even, if this should not be the Case, *Peremptoriness* is certainly a Thing that befits no Form of Understanding: Wise Men it makes *disobliging* and troublesome, and Fools *ridiculous* and contemptible: It casts a Prejudice upon the most *solid* Reasoning, and renders the *lighter* more notoriously despicable: *Good Parts*, by being tinged with it, are made a Snare to their Owners, and useless to others; and *mean Parts*, under its Infection, are condemned to be always so, by despising the Aids which should improve them.

The like may be said of that other Kind of *Peremptoriness*, which consists in asserting *Matters of Fact* with so much *Positiveness* that it is attended with many ill Consequences, though perhaps of a different Nature; that it often engages Men in Oaths and Execrations, to confirm their incredible Stories; that it betrays them into Feuds and perpetual Quarrels, when they meet with others as positive as themselves; that it exposes them to the Contempt and Scorn of every Company, while the

Good

Good abominate their Sin, and the *Ill* triumph over their Folly; and yet, after all, that it is so far from gaining Credit to their present Affirmations, that it destroys it for the future: For he that sees a Man make no Difference in the Confidence of his asserting *Realities* and *Fictions* can never take his Measures by any Thing he avers, but, according to the common *Proverb*, will be in Danger of disbelieving him, even when he speaks Truth.

In the mean Time, what is there, that he proposes to himself by his Positiveness, that may not be obtained more effectually by a modest and unconcerned Relation? He that barely relates what he has heard, or proposes modestly what his Opinion is, leaving the Hearer to judge of its Probability, does, doubtless, as civilly entertain the Company, as he that throws down his *Gauntlet* in Attestation of what he affirms. He as much, nay, much more, persuades his Hearers, because violent Asseverations serve only to give Men an untoward Umbrage, that the Speaker is conscious of his own Falseness; and all the While he has his Retreat secure, and stands not responsible for the Truth and Certainty of what he affirms or relates. So that, upon the whole, though the Things which Men advance be never so certain and infallible, yet it seems much more decent and adviseable not to press them with too much Importunity; because *Boldness*, as we hinted before, is so known a *Pander* to *Lying*, that Truth cannot but come in Danger of being defamed by its Attendance and Proximity.

To conclude, Modesty is so amiable, so insinuating, that all the Rules of Oratory cannot help Men to a more agreeable Ornament in Discourse: And, if they would but try it in the two foregoing Instances, they will undoubtedly find it to be Fact —that

—that a modest Proposal will sooner captivate Mens Reason, and a modest Relation their Belief.

These are some of the Duties and Enormities of Speech, in the Pursuit or Avoidance of which the good or ill Government of our Tongue will consist: And therefore, to heighten our Care in this Respect, let it be remembered, that the Use of Speech is a peculiar Prerogative of Man above other Creatures, and bestowed upon us for most excellent Purposes; which we sadly pervert when we make it an Instrument, either of reviling God, or injuring our Brother, or exposing ourselves: That our *Breath*, as well as other Faculties, is the pure Gift of God, which he may withdraw when he pleases; and, in so doing, surprise us, perhaps, with an Oath, a Blasphemy, or a Detraction in our Mouths: That, if this he should not do, our Transgressions, however, of this Kind, do not fly off into empty Air, but are recorded in the Volume of his all-containing Mind, to be produced against us at the great Day of Judgment: And that, in the great and terrible Day of the Lord, *every idle Word* (as we are told) and much more than every wicked and prophane, every hurtful and abusive Word, *that Men shall speak, they shall give an Account thereof*. Since *Death and Life*, then, *are in the Tongue*; since *by our Words we shall be justified, and by our Words we shall be condemned*; since so great a Stress is laid upon this, that, *if any Man seemeth to be religious and bridleth not his Tongue, that Man's Religion is vain*; how earnest should the Consideration of these Things make us in our daily Supplications to God, that, in Conjunction with our own Endeavours, he would be pleased to *set a Watch before our Mouths, and keep the Door of our Lips*, that no corrupt Communication, of any Kind, may proceed from thence, but that which is good to the Use of edifying, that it may minister Glory

to God, *Grace to the Hearers*, and *Salvation to our own Souls*.

SECT. III.

Of the Government of the whole Man.

THE two great Virtues relating to the Government of the rest of the Body, are *Chastity* and *Temperance*: But of these we shall have less Reason to treat with any great Prolixity, because they are Things obvious to every one's Conception.

I. Now *Chastity*, as it relates to a single State, consists in a total Abstinence from all Manner of Uncleaness; not only that of Adultery and Fornication, but from all other more unnatural Sorts, whether committed upon ourselves, or in Commerce with any other: And, even in a *conjugal Estate*, it requires such Temper and Moderation, as may preserve the Ends of Matrimony, and continue it (what it was intended to be) a *Remedy*, and not an *Incentive* to Lasciviousness. Nor does this Virtue restrain us from the grosser Acts only, but sets a Guard likewise upon our Eyes, upon our Hands, upon our Tongues, and upon our very Thoughts and Imaginations; for it accounts all lascivious Looks, obscene Language, impure Thoughts, and immodest Behaviour; all pampering and luxurious Diet to inflame ourselves; all industrious Endeavours to kindle those Flames, and attract, first the Eyes, and then the Desires of others. But of these Things we have to say, that as of all Vices, to which Mankind are subject, there is none of greater Danger and worse Consequence to us, than those, which the Lusts of our Flesh tempt us to; none, to which Nature is more prone;

prone ; none, by which it is more vilely debased, more shamefully exposed, and more mortally wounded ; that Person we cannot but pronounce very happy, who, in Strength of this Virtue, *keeps under his Body, and brings it into Subjection* ; since by it he is Conqueror of the strongest and subtlest Enemy, and has learnt to be deaf to the busiest and most importunate Sollicitations of a *Syren*, that labours perpetually to ruin him by her treacherous Incantations ; since by it he secures his native Freedom and Greatness of Spirit, preserves his Faculties from those thick Mists, by which Sense and Appetites ungoverned darken their Sight ; secures Order and Peace within, by subduing all rebellious Passions, and keeping Reason and Religion constantly supreme ; fixing the Affections upon such Objects, as deserve their Care and Affiduity, and exercising the Mind in the sweet Raptures of Meditations and Prayers, the Thirst of spiritual Comforts, and the unspeakable Delights, which result from an holy Conversation, and fervent Love of God. And so we proceed to

II. The other Virtue, which concerns our Bodies, and that is *Temperance*, which seems to be of different Sorts, according to the Objects about which it is exercised. For there is, 1. Temperance in *Eating and Drinking*, which is not only a necessary Duty in Christianity, but a very ornamental Virtue likewise. It renders lovely and beautiful the Person that is endued with it : It makes him respected and revered by all, that know him. For a Man, that eats and drinks only for Necessity, to repair the daily Decays of his Body, and not to please his Palate, or satisfy the Cravings of a luxurious and extravagant Appetite, lives as becomes a Man ; upholds the Dignity of his Nature, and maintains that Dominion, which the *rational* Part of him, his Soul, ought to have over the

brutish Part of him, his Body : Whereas he, who is a Slave to his Palate, or drinks away his Reason, turns a wise Man into a Fool, and a Man into a Beast ; and is therefore more vile and despicable than other Fools, or other Beasts ; because his Folly, or his Want of Reason, is the Effect of his own vicious Choice, whereas theirs was the Lot of their Creation : *Take heed therefore to yourselves,* says our Saviour, *lest, at any Time, your Hearts be overcharged with Surfeiting and Drunkenness ; for Wine is a Mocker ; strong Drink is raging, and whatsoever is deceived thereby is not wise.*

2. There is Temperance in *Apparel*, which consists in our using such Habits and Dresses, as suit with the *Custom* of the Country, where we live, and that *Station* and *Quality* of Life, whereunto we are appointed. *Gorgeous Apparel*, as our Saviour observes, *is fit for the Courts of Kings* : Nor is it any Ostentation of Pride, but rather a Matter of good Order and Decency, that Persons, invested with high Power and Authority, should, in their very Garb and Appearance, distinguish themselves from others : But then there are these Restrictions, which this Virtue of Temperance lays upon Men of all Conditions. 1. That the Costliness of Apparel exceed not the Quality and Ability of the Wearer. For besides the Debts, and other consequential Mischiefs, unavoidably incurred by such Extravagance ; this certainly is an Offence against the *Decency* we just now mentioned, against that natural and becoming *Order*, which the Wisdom of all Ages has agreed upon, as most convenient to discriminate People one from another, and, in the Matter of Quality, to prevent Disrespect and Confusion. 2. That the Costliness of our Apparel obstruct not our doing the Good, we might otherwise do, in several Acts of Charity : For, since Charity and doing Good

is the very End of God's bestowing Riches upon us, the Pretence of our desiring them, and the best Use we can possibly make of them; we certainly must be self-condemned, if, to please a vitiated Imagination of our own, or attract the Eyes of others, we lay them out in such extravagant Manner upon ourselves, as to defraud many poor and needy Creatures of the necessary Comforts of Life. 3. That our Dress and Attire be such, as shall neither naturally, nor designedly serve to the Purposes of Looseness and Immodesty in ourselves, nor minister Temptations to the unwary Hearts, or the heated and depraved Imaginations of others. 4. That too much of our Time be not taken up in dressing and adorning ourselves; because Time is not our own, and must not be expended, as we think fit. And, 5. That, when we are never so richly and elegantly dressed, we be not so conceited, and highly opinionated of ourselves, as to look down upon others, that make not the like Appearance, with Contempt and Derision. For, since Dress adds no real Value to any Person, the Vanity must be egregious, to spend any considerable Part, either of our Thoughts, or Time, or Wealth, or Esteem, about them.

3. Once more; there is a Temperance in the Matter of our Recreations. For, though these are not only useful, but, many Times, necessary, to breathe our Spirits, after they have been almost stifled in a Crowd of Business, and so divert our wearied Thoughts, which, like the Strings of a Lute, by being slackened now and then, will sound the sweeter, when they come to be wound up again; yet we must take great Care, that we turn not our *Physick* into *Food*, and make that our *Business*, which should be our *Diversion*; that our Recreations be short, and apt to refresh, but not to steal

away our Minds from severer Employments. For long Sports and Recreations are like a large Entry to a little House; they take up so much Room in the narrow Compass of our Time, that there is not Space enough left in it for the more useful Apartments; and, so far as our Sports do exceed the Measures of necessary and convenient Recreation, they are unwarrantable Incroachments either upon our Calling, or our Religion. The like Care we must take, to make our Recreations a *liberal Exercise* to amuse and recreate us, and not a sordid Trade to get Money. For some Money indeed we may be allowed to play, as much, as will be neither any great Concern to the Loser, nor Triumph to the Winner; but he, that proposes to adventure any considerable Sum this Way, runs himself manifestly into the Danger either of *Covetousness*, and an eager Desire of winning, or of *Rage*, and Anger at his ill Fortune, if he happens to lose; both of which will naturally engage him in other Commissions. *Covetousness* will tempt him to cheat and cozen, and *Anger* to swear and curse, as common Experience shews: The Man therefore, who plays *deep*, may every Time be said to set his Soul, together with his Money, to stake, and is sure to lose all Sense of the Sport and Recreation, which he pretends to aim at; because, all the while that he plays, he is convulsed with alternate Passions, and has, at one Time, the Desires and Fears of the *Covetous*, and, anon, the Impatience and Rage of the *furious* Man, boiling in his Breast.

These are some of the chief Instances of that Virtue of Temperance, which concerns our Bodies, and we have only hitherto considered the Transgressions of them, in Point of Excess. *There is another Evil*, says the Royal Preacher, *which I have seen under the Sun, and it is common among Men; a Man, to whom God hath given Riches, Wealib,*

Wealth, and Honour, so that he wanteth nothing for his Soul of all that he desireth; yet God giveth him not Power to eat thereof. Miserable Creatures! who cannot find in their Hearts to borrow so much from their Chests, as may fill their Bellies, or cloath their Backs; who are so intent upon the World, so moiling and drudging in it, that they cannot afford themselves competent Times for Sleep, much less for Recreations: This is Vanity, and it is an evil Disease. And therefore he very justly concludes, it is good and comely for one to eat and drink, meaning in Moderation, and to enjoy the Good of all the Labour, that he taketh under the Sun, all the Days of his Life, which God giveth him; for this is his Portion, and the Gift of God.

Of Mortification.

EVER since the first Corruption of our Nature, our Bodies are become the Instruments of Sin, and the Desires and Appetites, that arise from thence, are in a great Measure our Prompters and Seducers to it. These are the *Lusts*, which *war against the Soul*, as the Apostle declares; and yet they have the good Luck to be thought our dearest Friends, and looked upon as a Part of ourselves. In them, when *accomplished*, we account ourselves happy; in them, when *crossed*, we account ourselves miserable; and in them, when *unheard*, we account ourselves affronted. We allow them indeed to do any Thing with us; they can put out our Eyes, and be welcome; they can blind our Judgments, and make Stupidity please us. Our holy Religion however teaches us another Lesson: It informs us, that, notwithstanding this dear Union and Commerce between Soul and Body, there are no two in the World at greater Enmity with one another; none, that drive on

such different Interests, as they. Our fleshly Lusts are in a State of Rebellion against our Reason; and to listen to them is to be Confederates to our own Ruin. Some of them are *actually* evil, and the rest are inclinable to be so; and therefore the Business of Religion is to destroy the *one*, and restrain the *other*; from whence arise the two great Christian Duties of *Mortification* and *Self-denial*.

I. The Apostle, speaking of what we have hinted above, *viz.* that *the Flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the Flesh, and that these are contrary the one to the other*, gives us a long Muster-Roll of that formidable Army of Wickedness, against which we engaged ourselves at our Baptism to contend. *The Works of the Flesh*, says he, *are manifest, which are these: Adultery, Fornication, Uncleaness, Lasciviousness, Idolatry, Witchcraft, Hatred, Variance, Emulation, Wrath, Strife, Seditions, Heresies, Envyings, Murders, Drunkenness, Revellings, and such-like.* Now, to some, or more of these, every one of us, by our depraved Nature, is inclined, and perhaps have run great Lengths in the Commission of them. The Inclination or Appetite therefore, whereby we have been instigated to do these Things, we must so totally extirpate and destroy, as to leave no Remains of it in our Nature. For it is not enough, that we neither *practise* any of these Sins, nor *consent* to the Practice of them, unless we make it our constant Endeavour likewise to wean and abstract ourselves from those evil Tendencies and Inclinations, which we have contracted by our adhering to them. These Inclinations indeed are no farther our Sins, than we yield our Consent to them; yet, while we patiently harbour them in our Bosom, without endeavouring to smother and extinguish them, they are in some Measure chosen and *voluntary*, and may be said to have in them the

Bane

Bane and Formality of Sin. Though we should not think it proper, for Instance, to run into the the same Acts of Lasciviousness, that we have formerly done; yet, while we retain, with Delight, our Inclination towards it, we are still incontinent in the Sight of God. We must not think therefore, that our Sin is mortified, because we neither practise, nor consent to the Practice of it; for, while we have any Inclinations to it remaining in us, we must strive to subdue and conquer them; otherwise we have only forced our Enemy into his last Retreat, where, by our own Neglect, we give him an Opportunity to rally, and re-inforce himself against us. Our Sin still lives in our Inclination to Sin, and will soon, if it be not beaten thence, recover its broken Forces, and become as formidable again as ever. If ever therefore we mean to *mortify* our vicious Inclination, we must not only abstain from the Sin itself, but avoid all Occasions, that lead to it; deny ourselves those lawful Liberties, that too nearly approach it, and impose upon ourselves such voluntary Restraints and Severities, as have a natural Tendency to starve and root it out.

How much it is every Christian's Duty, in this Sense of the Word, to mortify his evil and corrupt Affections, needs not surely to be told him, when he remembers, how, at his first Initiation into the Service of Christ, he renounced all the sinful Lusts of the Flesh; and, at the sacred Altar, when he ratified his baptismal Vow, offered and presented unto God himself his Soul and Body, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively Sacrifice unto him: When he reflects, how frequently, in the Old Testament, he is called upon to cease to do Evil, and learn to do well; to circumcise himself to the Lord, and to take away the Fore-skin of his Heart; and how incessantly, in the New, to purge out the old Leaven, in

order to become a new Lump, and to put off, concerning his former Conversation, the Old Man, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful Lusts, and to be renewed in the Spirit of his Mind: And when he considers, how dismal a Prospect is set before him, if he continues his vicious Inclinations; but how blessed and joyful an one, if he abandons and destroys them: For this is a Decree, that should always be sounded in every Christian's Ear, *If ye live after the Flesh, ye shall die; but, if ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the Deeds of the Body, ye shall live.*

And indeed, if we consider the present Depavation of our Nature, together with the Nature of those Felicities, which God has provided for us in a future Life, we shall find it morally impossible for us ever to attain the one, without endeavouring to correct or amend the other. Our future Felicity will consist in the *beatific* Vision of God and his Christ, in the happy Society of Saints and Angels, and in such rational Pleasures and Employments, as the Beauty of the Object, and other Circumstances of the Place may be supposed to supply. But now, allowing the Case, that all the great Hindrances of Impiety were removed; that God were so easy and indulgent as to pass by, in the other World, all the Affronts, that wicked Souls have offered him in this; yet such is the *Incongruity* between their Temper, and the Temper of Heaven, that he could not make them happy *there*, without either creating in them a new Heart, or creating for them a new Heaven. For alas! if we consider the Matter rightly, how could Souls of their Relish and Complexion find a proper Employment for themselves in the Regions of Bliss? There are no Rivers of Wine to gratify their boundless Sensuality. No Parasite, to

flatter their Pride; no Miseries, to feed their Envy; no Mischiefs, to gratify their Revenge; but all the Felicities, with which that heavenly State abounds, *viz.* Praise, Love, and Contemplation, are such, that they would loath and nauseate them, as too pure and *refined* for their depraved Appetites; and not improbably, if they had their own Option, desire to flee to Hell for Shelter, and to Spirits of their own Depravity, rather than stay to be tormented in an Heaven so incongruous to their Nature. And hence we may observe, that, as necessary as it is to obtain Heaven and avoid Hell, so necessary it is for us to crucify the Flesh, as the Apostle speaks, with *the Affections and Lusts*; because God has reduced us to this short Issue, either our Sins or our Souls must die: So that, unless we value eternal Happiness so little, as to exchange it for the sordid trifling Pleasures of Sin; and unless we love our Sins so well, as to ransom them with the Blood of our immortal Souls; it nearly concerns us, in the next Place, to sit us down, and consider a little, by what Helps and Instruments we may best be enabled to subdue them.

Considering the Infirmary of our Natures, and the many Temptations, we have to encounter; how we are habituated to a *sensual* Life, before we are capable of exercising our Reason, and how much our Wills are *biased*, and led aside by our carnal Inclinations; it is hardly to be imagined, that we should ever be able to retrieve ourselves from the Power and Dominion of our Lusts, without some *supernatural* Aid and Assistance. We want not indeed an *Understanding*, capable of distinguishing between Good and Evil; nor is our *Will* so far determined to Evil, as not to be able to comply with the Dictates of right Reason; we can deliberate what is best to chuse, and chuse what

we find best upon Deliberation ; but then we are like a Man standing between two contrary Roads, naturally indeed free to turn either to the Right-Hand or to the Left ; but, on the Left-hand Way, there are so many Temptations, perpetually *beckoning* to us, and inviting us unto that which is evil, and our carnal Passions and Appetites are so ready, upon all Occasions, to yield and comply with them, that we should certainly attend to their *Lure*, did not the Holy Spirit, with very strong Arguments, importune us to turn to the Right-Hand Way of Virtue and Goodness.

The great Principle then, which is to begin and conduct the Work of our *Mortification*, is the Spirit of God, operating upon our Minds, sometimes by the Arguments and Motives of the Gospel ; sometimes by external Providences, that excite us to our Duty ; sometimes by the Aids and Assistances of his Holy Angels ; and many Times by those internal Motions and Suggestions, which he himself immediately infuses. But, how great a Share soever this blessed Agent may have in this Work, yet, since we are enjoined to *cleanse ourselves from all Filthiness both of Flesh and Spirit, perfecting Holiness in the Fear of God*, there is certainly some Part of it incumbent upon us. As we are naturally dead in Trespasses and Sins, we cannot indeed give the first Motions to our Minds, in the Business we are now speaking of ; but, when once we perceive it given, we have the Means and Instruments in our Power, that are proper to continue it, and, by the Blessing of God, to bring it to Perfection. Upon any sudden Conviction of the Sinfulness of our Ways, we can sit ourselves down, and consider the Motives and Arguments, which our Holy Religion has provided us against the most pleasant and alluring, the most profitable and advantageous of our Lusts. When we have weighed

weighed these in a just Balance, the momentary Pleasures and Profits of this Life, with that Eternity of Happiness or Misery, that waits us in the next, we can then take a Survey of the Road that leads to our Duty, and view carefully all the Difficulties and Temptations, that lie in our Way; and, when we have made a proper Estimate of both, ask our Hearts seriously, whether, for the Joys, *that are set before us*, in a distant Country, they are willing to surmount the one, and renounce the other. After we have thus calmly considered with ourselves all the Arguments against our Lusts, and all the Difficulties of forsaking them, and have reasoned our Wills into an *express* Consent to abandon them for ever; we can then fall down upon our bended Knees, and, in a solemn Manner, devote ourselves to God's Service, most religiously vowing and promising, that, whatever we have done amiss, we will never do so any more. In Obedience to this Resolution, we can keep ourselves at a wary Distance from our Lusts, and every Thing, that may prove an Excitement to them; at least, till we have so far gotten the *Mastery* of them, that their Nearness ceases to be a Temptation to us: And, to compleat this Mastery, we can draw off from the Enemy their Succours, by Fasting and Abstinence; can confirm our Party by a religious Observation of God's holy Ordinances; and procure fresh *Auxiliaries* from above, by constant Invocation and Prayer.

This is certainly what any of us can do: And, if we continue to do this, with an hearty Purpose to extricate ourselves from the Paths of Destruction, there is no Doubt, but that *God's Grace will be sufficient for us*. By the Concurrence of this Principle with our own Faculties, this holy Resolution was at first *begotten* in us; and therefore 'twill injure the Character of our Heavenly Father,

ther, to think, that, for Want of any Assistance, so long as our own Endeavours are not wanting, he will suffer his own Offspring to become abortive.

Of Self-denial.

THE only Place, as I remember, wherein the Duty of *Self-denial* is expressly enjoined us, is in the Discourse, which our Saviour held with his Disciples, not long before his *Crucifixion*; and, to find out the true Sense of the Word, it may not be amiss to enquire a little into some Circumstances, that occasioned the Discourse. Our Saviour, as the Text acquaints us, had, some Time before, *shewn unto his Disciples, that he must go up to Jerusalem, and suffer many Things of the Elders, and Chief Priests, and Scribes, and, at last, be killed.* Upon the hearing of this, *Peter*, who was always particularly zealous for his Master's Welfare, presumes to expostulate with him, and (as the Text expresses it) *to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord, this shall not be unto thee.* There is a peculiar *Emphasis* in the Words, *Καὶ σὺ ὁ κύριε*, which our Translation does not so well answer. For they properly mean, *Lord, favour thyself, or be not so negligent of thy Safety, as to suffer such Evils to come upon thee.* This, in itself, was no unkind Speech of the Apostle; but then the Misfortune was, that he had made no provisional Exception for the Glory of God, nor any Reserve for those Obligations, which the Cause of Righteousness required of his Master; and for this Reason he met with so severe a Reprehension — *Get thee behind me, Satan, thou art an Offence to me; for thou savourest not the Things that be of God, but those that be of Men.* The Character of this Disciple will hardly admit us to think, that, how much soever his Advice might favour of *Flesh and Blood*, there was any Spark in it, either of
Pride,

Pride, Dissimulation, or Malice of Intention, which the Devil is wont to make use of in his Addresses to Mankind; and therefore it may be no bad Conjecture, that our Blessed Saviour called his Disciple *Satan*, "because he had imprudently run upon the same Advice, that Satan employs, the most successful of all others, to ruin and undo Men by, and that is the Advice of *Self-indulgence*."

However this be, 'tis certain, that our Saviour takes Occasion, from hence, to recommend two Duties, which himself intended to practise, though little in Use, before his Example taught us the Way; *Self-denial*, which, being a Man's own Act, requires, that he should suffer from himself by voluntary Inflictions; and *taking up our Cross*, which, being inflicted by another's Act, (for every condemned Person was, by his Sentence, to bear his Cross to the Place of Execution) requires a submissive and patient bearing of involuntary Evils, or such as the Providence of God ordains to come upon us from other Hands. *Then said Jesus unto his Disciples, if any Man will come after me, in the Capacity of a Disciple, and Professor of my Religion, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross, and follow me.*

From this Exposition of the Context we may observe, that, by the Word *Self*, in the Compound, we are not to understand (as some have imagined) any of the criminal Affections of our animal Part, but such only as are of an indifferent Nature. In our Constitution (as we said in the former Section) we have Appetites, some that are morally evil, and others, that in themselves are innocent, and only liable to be depraved, if they chance to be immoderately indulged. Of this Kind are the Desires of Ease and Indolence, of proper Refreshments and honest Pleasures, and of avoiding such Things, as are noxious and afflicting to human Nature; these were

were in our Nature from the very first, even before Sin had defaced its Purity, and, consequently, our Saviour took them upon him with our Nature, though, it is certain, he partook of nothing that was sinful in it. To these it was, that *St Peter*, in the Advice he gave his Master, addressed himself; and his Master, in his Rejection of that Advice, has given us to understand, that even the most innocent Desires of Nature are, upon some Occasions, to be restrained. So that the Sum of the Doctrine, we are to insist on under this Head, will amount to this——“ That there are *voluntary* “ Severities, consisting in the Submission of our- “ selves to many unpleasing Things, tho’ other- “ wise *avoidable*; and in the Restraint of ourselves “ from many pleasant Things, tho’ otherwise *law- “ ful*, which, upon their respective Occasions, we “ ought to engage in, as absolutely necessary to “ make us good Christians.”

When we find the Christian State so often compared unto a *Warfare*, it is to let us understand, that there is a necessary and continual Engagement of our *rational* Desires against our *sensual*, in order to bring them under, and keep them in Obedience; and this is a Warfare, from whence there must be no *Dismission*. There must be no League, no Truce, no laying down of Arms in it: For our Enemies are perfidious, and will never keep Peace; and therefore we are never out of Danger, but while we are actually fighting. *St Paul*, a Man of Miracles and Visions, and of Sanctity of Life more glorious than either, even while he was daily fought against from without, by the Malice of Satan and evil Men, was nevertheless obliged to fight against himself, to *cast down* his Mind, as he calls it, and *to beat down his Body*, and bodily Affections: And lest we might suppose, that he did this from a Principle of Vain-glory, the Affectation of Singu-
larity,

larity, or a simple Mistake of Judgment, he tells us withal, that the Reason of his exercising such Discipline over himself was, lest, for the Want of it, *he might possibly be a Cast-away*: And, if so great a *Saint* was obliged to maintain this Fight, for Fear of being a *Cast-away*, who among Christians can lay down their Arms, and be safe?

Now, this fighting with our Appetites and Desires is the very same Thing, as *denying ourselves*; and the Practice of it consists in restraining them, and not giving them leave to *satiare* themselves on their particular Objects: For he that gives his Appetites their loose, and their fill, even of Enjoyments, that are otherwise lawful, brings himself in Danger of being worsted by them: Because, by what he allows them, they will grow so very strong, that 'tis a thousand to one, but they will take the rest, in Spite of his Approbation.

Thus, in the ordinary Course of every Man's Life, the Duty of *Self-denial* is necessary, even tho' he has never fallen into any flagitious Way: But then, if unhappily he has been engaged in a Course of Sin, the Reasons and Obligations of it become stronger. To this Purpose, *St Paul*, speaking of the several Offices of Repentance, reckons them up in the following Manner: *Behold this self-same Thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly Sort, what Carefulness is wrought in you, yea, what Clearing of yourselves, yea, what Indignation, yea, what Fear, yea, what vehement Desire, yea, what Zeal, yea, what Revenge!* So that a Man cannot repent, in the Sense of the Scripture, without bringing himself under the daily Severities of Mourning, and Vigilance, and Restraint of Delights, and Labour in the Works of Charity, and whatever else may conduce to the humbling of our Nature, and taking *Revenge* upon those Passions and Desires, whereby we have offended God. And, for this Reason, I suppose,

suppose, it is, that the *Ancients* were wont to call such Instances of *Penance* by the Name of *Satisfactions*: Not that they esteemed them of Value to satisfy the Divine Justice, nothing but the Blood of *Jesus* can do that; but that they thought them the Conditions, which the Gospel requires of *Penitents*, as highly necessary, both for their present Correction and future Caution: And accordingly we may observe, that, whenever the *Fathers* used this Word, 'tis either with Respect to *Men*, or to *God*; if to *Men*, then the Meaning of it is, that, by these external Acts of Sorrow, we *satisfy* the *Church* of our Repentance, and make Reparation for those Offences and Scandals, which we gave by our Sins; but if to *God*, then 'tis taken for the Acknowledgment of our Faults, and the earnest Desire we have of Pardon and Forgiveness.

Nor is the Duty of Self-denial necessary to our present Condition only, whether we consider it in a *settled* or *penitential* Capacity; but as it has a Tendency likewise to our future Glory and Felicity. It can hardly escape the Observation of any common Reader, that there is, in Scripture, a certain *Fitness* or *Meetness* required in those, that are to be *Partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light*; but then the Question is, how we must acquire this *Fitness*? And by what Means we are to induce this perfective Disposition into our Souls? The Apostle, indeed, tells us, concerning our Saviour himself, that *he was made perfect through Sufferings*; for it became him, says he, of whom are all Things, and by whom are all Things, in bringing many Sons unto Glory, to make the Captain of their Salvation perfect through Sufferings: But then these Words do not absolutely imply, that these Sufferings of our Saviour were necessary for his *personal* Perfection: He might have passed to Glory an easier Way, because he wanted no Virtue to accom-

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plish and qualify him for that State. They imply, however, that his Sufferings were necessary for his *exemplary* Perfection, *i. e.* as he was to be an Example to us, and the Captain and President of our Salvation ; as he was to lead us the Way, by which many *adopted Sons* of God might likewise pass into Glory, so it was necessary that he should be made *perfect by Sufferings*, because no adopted Son, no Christian, can ever be perfect without them : And accordingly we find it mentioned in the Christian Covenant, as an express Condition of our future Glory, that, *if we suffer with Christ, we shall also reign with him* ; for it is *through much Tribulation*, (through many Wrestlings or Contendings, as it is in the *Original*) *that we must enter into the Kingdom of God.*

Now, if the Spirit of God gives us Warning, that Sufferings are of so necessary Importance to our future Welfare, and yet, at the same Time, does not lay upon us any outward Necessity to suffer ; this is a plain Indication, I think, that the Necessity lies upon ourselves to take Care, that we suffer from our own *voluntary* Discipline ; that we fast often, pray much, impose Tasks of Labour, strict Rules of Abstinence, and have a continual Watch over ourselves, which, in the Time of the Church's Peace and Tranquillity, was called a *daily Martyrdom*.

The primitive Christians were very remarkable for this Kind of Discipline : Their callous Knees, and guttered Cheeks, and meagre Looks, occasioned by their fasting, weeping, and praying, are often taken Notice of in Antiquity, though with us mistaken for superstitious Usages, and Acts of Supererogation. That Christian, however, (as *St Jerom* calls one upon a like Occasion) that Christian, I say, is by much too *delicate*, who would excuse himself from this Discipline in the School

of Christ, when we may find, that, in every *Heathen* School, they required no less to make a *Philosopher*; that is, in the Sense of their sober Stile, an honest and good Man.

Epicurus, indeed, presented the World with a very *specious Scheme*, when he pretended to satisfy the Aims both of *Sense* and *Morality* together, when he invited Men to Virtue and Pleasure at the same Time; telling them, that a Life, which was both virtuous and pleasurable, was purely *the Life of the Gods*. But all the other Sects remonstrate against this new *Doctor*, as one, who, by hanging out the Flag of Pleasure, had covered all that was *true*, and laid aside all that was *great* in Philosophy. They had juster Notions of the Corruption of human Nature; and therefore they teach, that whoever intends to be a virtuous Man, must by no Means propose his Life to be a Scene of Pleasure. They teach us, that *Wisdom* and *Felicity* have built their *Palaces* together upon a craggy *Rock*, whither it is not a little difficult to ascend: They represent their *Hercules*, as always engaging in Labours, always seeking Conflicts, always harsh and severe to himself; and his Character they propose to their Scholars, as the common Guide to Proficiency in good Living. But we have our Instruction from a better Fountain, and are sufficiently advertised what we are to do, when we are commanded, by our Blessed Saviour, *to enter in at the strait Gate; for wide is the Gate, and broad is the Way, that leadeth to Destruction; but strait is the Gate, and narrow is the Way, which leadeth to Life, and few there be that find it.*

Of Regeneration.

THE first Place, wherein we find express Mention made of our *Regeneration*, is (as I take it) in our Saviour's Conference with *Nicodemus*. *Nicodemus* was a Ruler of the *Jews*, and of the Sect of the *Pharisees*, great Enemies to our Blessed Lord; but, being convinced, by his Doctrine and Miracles, of his Divine Mission and Authority, he came, no doubt, tho' it was at Night that he came, with an Intent to be farther instructed by him. The Evangelist has recorded the first Address, which this Ruler makes to our Saviour; but, from the Nature of our Saviour's Answer, some have been induced to think, that his whole Speech is not related; and that, after he had done his Preface, he might not improbably put some such Questions to our Lord, as we find the young Man did in the Gospel, *viz. What good Things he was to do, that he might obtain eternal Life?* Because the Answer, which is returned him, is so very much to this Purpose, and seems to have so slender a Connexion with what went before; *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a Man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.*

To be born again is a Form of Speech, which not only occurs in the Writings of some *Gentile Moralists*, but was of common Use among the *Jewish Doctors*. They received *Profelytes* into the Church by Baptism; and being persuaded, that the *Heathen Soul* was, by this Means, washed away, and a new and pure one substituted in its room, they were, for this Reason, wont to call these *Profelytes new-born, new Men, new Creatures*, and the like. This was the common Phrase and Stile of the *Rabbins*, and therefore our Saviour very justly reproves *Nicodemus* for his Ignorance of it; *Art thou*

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thou a Master of Israel, and knowest not these Things? The Design of the Expression, however, is to inform us, that there is a two-fold Birth or Nativity, which every one is to undergo: The *first* is common and *natural*; when the tender Infant quits its closter Cell, wherein it has been some Months imprisoned, and, coming into the World, enters into a new and different State from what it was in before: But the *second* is spiritual and *supernatural*, when a Person, upon his firmly believing and embracing the Gospel of Christ, is not only changed from his wicked Courses, to a contrary Form of living, but is possessed likewise with Thoughts, and Desires, and Affections, quite different from what he had before; insomuch, that, both to himself and others, who behold him, he looks not like the same Man, but in the Temper of his Mind, as well as the Tenor of his Actions, is indeed another Creature.

His *Understanding*, which was before *darkened*, being alienated from the *Life of God*, through the *Ignorance* that was in him, becomes then *enlightened* to discern his true Interest, and is informed with the Knowledge of those great Truths, which he is most of all required to know, concerning God and himself, and a Life to come. This Knowledge has a powerful Effect and Influence over his Will and Affections. The Belief of the great Truths of the Gospel gives him a new Set of Principles, makes him have different Notions and Opinions of Things, form different Prospects and Projects, and steer quite a contrary Course, to what he did before. For, whereas before he consulted only his present Ease and Pleasure, studied the Gratifications of his sensual Lusts and Appetites, and gave himself up to the Interests of this Life, the Welfare of his Body, and the Concerns of the World; he now *mortifies his Members, which are*
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upon the Earth, endeavours to subdue his Passions, and to get above his Body, and above the World. He is now governed by Reason, and not by Sense; *he walks by Faith, and not by Sight*; and the World is crucified to him, and he to the World. He calculates all his Actions for Eternity, and is not so much concerned what befalls him here, as what shall become of him hereafter. In a Word, he is new moulded and fashioned, formed over again, and created, as it were, anew, by being furnished with a new Principle of Life and Action, engaged in new Courses, and put upon new Designs and Undertakings. He has new Objects of his Hopes and Fears, of his Love and Hatred, new Thoughts and Sentiments of Things, and new Rules for the Conduct of his Life and Actions. *Old Things are past away, and all Things are become new to him*; nay, he is even new to himself, as well as others; and therefore very properly in Scripture-Language is he called *a new Creature, or a new Creation*.

At the *first* Creation of the World, *the Spirit of God*, as we are told, *moved upon the Face of the Waters*, and was concerned in the Formation of Man: And, in the *second* Creation, or Redemption of the World, the same Spirit moves in Mens Hearts, and inclines them to comply with those gracious Terms of Reconciliation, which are offered to the World. And, for this Reason, St *John*, speaking of those that believed in our Saviour, gives us to know, that *they were born, not of Blood, nor of the Will of the Flesh, nor of the Will of Man, but of God, i. e.* it was not by any Strength of their own, that they had this Power of becoming *the Sons of God*; by believing in our Saviour, but by the Power of Divine Grace, proceeding from the Spirit of God. The same Power, which first formed Man out of the Dust of the

Earth, and, when he is returned to Dust, will raise him out of it again, does create us again unto good Works, and fashion us after the Image of him, who first created us in Righteousness and true Holiness : For, *if the Spirit of him, that raised Jesus from the Dead, dwell in us ; he, that raised up Christ from the Dead, shall quicken our mortal Bodies, i. e. from dead Works now, and hereafter from Death itself, by his Spirit, that dwelleth in us.*

We must not however imagine, that, because the Author of our Regeneration is an Almighty Agent, the Effects of his Operations upon our Minds are either *instantaneous* or *irresistible* ; that ourselves are purely *passive* under them, can contribute nothing towards them, and are wholly ignorant of the Steps and Measures, that are taken in them. For, besides that these Notions are a manifest Defeat of all the Exhortations and Threatenings recorded in Scripture, and a great Discouragement to all virtuous Endeavours ; they are a plain Contradiction to Reason and common Experience, both of which do abundantly testify, that the Grace of God, and those good Motions, which are stirred up in us, may be, and frequently are, neglected and resisted ; that Men must do something themselves, in order to conquer their vicious Inclinations, and acquire settled Habits of Piety and Virtue ; and that this is a Work, which cannot be done in an Instant, but requires Time, as well as Pains, to bring it to Perfection.

From what hath been said on this Subject, thus far pursued, we may plainly perceive, that Regeneration is that Change and Alteration in a Man, whereby his Nature, which is corrupted by Sin, is sanctified and purified ; whereby his Iniquities are purged away ; and he, by God's Spirit, endued with true Knowledge, Righteousness, and Holiness :

Holiness: And we come now to shew the absolute Necessity of it, in order to our future Happiness.

St Paul, speaking of some, who desired to make a fair Shew in the Flesh, and constrained others to be circumcised, tells us expressly, that in Christ Jesus neither Circumcision availeth any Thing, nor Uncircumcision, but a new Creature. Circumcision, we know, was an Ordinance of God's own Institution, the Seal of the Covenant between him and his People, a Mark of Distinction between them and other Nations, and a Symbol of inward Purity, or Sanctity of Mind; and yet the Apostle tells those, that held themselves obliged to the Observation of it, that all its supposed Privileges and Prerogatives, without a Renovation of their Nature, availed nothing: And, by Parity of Reason, he must be interpreted to say to us, that our Sacramental Washing in Baptism, our spiritual Gifts and Endowments, our profound Knowledge and Learning, our Observation of the Ordinances of Christ, and our outward Acts of religious Worship, will all avail us nothing, unless we have a new Principle implanted in us, such as influences our Lives, and produces Evangelical Obedience. For it is not saying to our Saviour, Lord, Lord! not all the fair Speeches, and Professions in the World, that will recommend us to the Favour of God, who hath eternally decreed, that without Holiness no Man shall see him; and that into the heavenly Jerusalem there shall, in no wise, enter any Thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh Abomination, or maketh a Lye.

What all the Particulars of that City of God may comprize, it does not yet appear; but this we know in general, that the Company, the Employment, and the Happiness of it, are of a pure and spiritual Nature, very different from any Thing here below, and directly contrary to all the sinful

Pleasures, and sensual Enjoyments of the Men of this World. And therefore, if we would be Partakers of the Resurrection of the Just; if we would be numbered among the Saints, and bear a Part in the Business and Employment, in the Joys and Pleasures of a future State; we must qualify and prepare ourselves for it, by cleansing our Hearts from all inordinate Passions, subduing our Lusts, and conquering the vicious Inclinations of our corrupt Nature; by acquiring good and virtuous Habits and Dispositions of Mind, an holy Frame and Temper of Soul, and renewing ourselves, Day by Day, after the Image of him, that created us, and the Likeness of him, that redeemed us. For this is the Will of God, even your *Sanctification, that ye put off, concerning the former Conversation, the Old Man, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful Lusts; and be renewed in the Spirit of your Mind; and that ye put on the New Man, which, after God, is created in Righteousness and true Holiness.*

If such then be the Ordination and Appointment of God, that, without being *regenerate*, there is no entering into the Kingdom of Heaven; it seems to be a Matter of no small Concernment to us, to be satisfied, unto what *Class* of Men it is that we belong. As long as we continue in this State of Infirmary, we cannot but be liable to Sin, nor is every Transgression an immediate Forfeiture of our Birth-Right: But then the Difference between the *Regenerate* and *Unregenerate* is this — that the one sins out of Incogitancy, or Want of Consideration; the other out of prepense Malice and Design; the one uses Means for the Discovery and Conviction of his Sin, the other negligently overlooks, and thinks no more of it; the one laments and bemoans it severely, the other makes a Mock of it perhaps, or pleases his Imagination

nation with frequent Reflections on it ; the one, from his Failings, improves his future Vigilance, the other hardens himself in sinning, and comes every Time to his Iniquity with more and more Greediness. The Sense, in short, and Conviction of Sin, the Confession of it, and the Remorse and Repentance for it, which the *Regenerate* express, proceed from their real Hatred of it, as it is the greatest Evil in its own Nature, and as it is displeasing to God. Their Wishes and Resolutions, and Promises, come from their Hearts, and therefore prove effectual. Their Belief of the Doctrines of the Gospel is well grounded, which makes it permanent and lasting. Their religious Exercises and Performances are Acts of the *inward Man*, of the Soul and Spirit, and spring from a deep Sense of the Majesty of him, to whom they are addressed. Their Obedience to the Divine Commands is impartial, and universal, and without Reserve. It flows from a lively and active Faith, from a Love of God, and their Duty, and from Sincerity of Heart ; and, lastly, they strive to do all this in a right Manner, and for a right End, the Glory of God, and of their Redeemer, *Jesus Christ*.

These are some of the *Signs*, whereby ye may perceive, whether or no ye belong to the Number of the *Regenerate* : If, upon Examination, ye find ye do not, *neither should your Eyes sleep, nor your Eye-lids slumber, nor the Temples of your Head take any Rest*, until you resolve upon a Change. *This is the one Thing necessary* ; and therefore let all your Cares and Projects, all your Aims and Designs give way to this. Without this, ye must perish everlastingly ; and *what is a Man profited, if he shall gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul* ? If, on the contrary, ye experimentally find, that the Grace of God's Holy Spirit has begun the Work of *Regeneration* in your Souls, has re-
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newed your Mind, and tamed your Passions, and changed your Lives, *rejoice, and be exceeding glad,* because your Renovation, being thus happily commenced, is a good Pledge, and Reason to hope, that your Names shall be *written in the Book of Life.*

Of abstaining from Evil-appearance.

ST Paul, towards the Conclusion of his first Epistle to the *Thessalonians*, praying with all Earnestness for them, *that the very God of Peace would sanctify them wholly, and that their whole Spirit, and Soul, and Body, might be preserved blameless, unto the Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ,* makes it on their Part a Means highly necessary to this good Effect, that they should *abstain from all Appearance of Evil, i. e.* that the whole Tenor of their Actions should not only be *innocent*, but of *good Report*; not only free from the Guilt of Sin, but even from the least Colour or Suspicion of it; so guarded with Care, and guided with Discretion, as not to give the least Occasion for any to blame or censure their righteous Doings.

This seems, at first Sight, to be the proper Sense of the Precept; but then we must take Care to reduce it under some Restrictions. For, since Mankind, as we daily find, are so very ignorant and passionate, apt to judge without Evidence, or according to Prejudice or Resentment; so full of Hypocrisy, and willing to exalt themselves, by abusing others; so full of affected Wisdom, which they think they can best display by finding Faults; so addicted to Detraction, and careful to furnish themselves with Materials for Slander; and so conscious of their own Sins, and willing to conclude others under the like Condemnation: Since there are these, I say, and many more Reasons, to deprave Mens Judgments concerning others, 'tis certain,

certain, that no Action can be *innocent*, but what, for aught we know, may chance to appear sinful to some ignorant Men, nor any Duty so highly *obligatory*, but what, through Prejudice or Corruption, may be evil thought of : And therefore we should lay an insupportable Restraint upon our Liberty, if we were to debar ourselves from all innocent Actions, for Fear of offending some ; or we should stretch it too far, if we should presume to omit what is absolutely required of us by the Laws of God, merely to avoid the Censure of others.

Is it to the *Good* and *Wise* only then, that we are thus to approve ourselves ? This perhaps were no difficult Task, because they are not apt to mistake, nor disposed to miscontrue our Actions ; and therefore not likely to be offended with any Thing, but what is evidently and notoriously sinful. But then the Misfortune is, that this is a Limitation ; which the express Letter of Scripture will not admit of. For that we may not think, that we are concerned to justify our Conduct only to the *Wise*, we are taught by *St Peter*, that it is the Will of God, that, by *Well-doing*, we should put to Silence the Ignorance of foolish Men : That we may not satisfy ourselves with the good Opinion and Commendation of the *Charitable* and *Good-natured*, we are instructed by *St Paul* to do all we can do, that we may cut off Occasion of Censure, even from them, which desire Occasion. That we may not acquiesce in the good Esteem of our Friends and Adherents, we are required to shew such *Uncorruptness* and *Sincerity*, that he, who is on the contrary Part, may be ashamed, having no evil Thing to say of us : And finally, that we may not suppose any Man under such a State of *Sin* or *Ignorance*, as to slight his Opinion, and be altogether indifferent in what Manner our Actions appear to him, we are strictly enjoined, by the Manifestation of the Truth, to commend ourselves to every Man's Conscience in the Sight of God.

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Since then, by Virtue of this Precept, we are not obliged to abstain from all Actions, that appear evil, because the most innocent and unblameable may appear so to ignorant and wicked Men; and yet, in the ordering of our Conversation, we are bound to have a Respect to the Opinion of all Men, and to fence our Actions against the Mistakes and Calumnies of the most simple and malicious; since that, which to some will actually *appear evil*, both lawfully may, and sometimes necessarily must be done; and yet the *Appearance of Evil* must at all Times, and in all Cases, be studiously avoided; the Duty, which results from the Precept, can be no other than this, — “ That
 “ we do whatever in us lies to justify ourselves to
 “ Men, as well as God; that we take all possible
 “ Care so to place our innocent and laudable
 “ Actions in their true Light, that the wrong and
 “ accidental Appearance of Evil may not be our
 “ Fault; and that we use our utmost Endeavour
 “ to avoid that *Appearance of Sin*, which, after our
 “ utmost Endeavour, cannot always be avoided.”
 This must certainly be the true Sense of the Apostle’s Precepts; which we will, 1. Endeavour to enforce with an Argument or two; and then, 2. Adjoin some such Directions, as may conduce towards the Practice of it.

I. That Men, who have no other Measures to judge by, than outward Appearance, must necessarily judge of us according to what we *openly* seem to be, and not according to what we *inwardly* are; and that therefore the *Appearance of Evil* will give as deep a Wound to our Esteem among Men, as *real* Guilt itself can do, is a Truth so evident in *Theory*, and so well confirmed by constant *Experience*, that there needs no entering into a Detail of Arguments to prove it. The only Question is, whether a good Name be of that Value, as to deserve

serve a wise Man's Care, either to get it, or preserve it; whether a sincere Christian, who ought to sit loose to the World, and to approve himself to God and his own Conscience, should let a Regard to his Reputation bear any Sway at all in the governing of his Actions; whether, when he can honestly satisfy himself, that what he doth is in itself *innocent*, though to others it may appear *offensive*, the Fear of hurting his good Name thereby ought to restrain him from an Action, which, by carrying the Face of Evil, will tend to his Disgrace. And there is the greater Room for this Question, because some *Divines*, as well as *Moralists*, have taken a great deal of Pains to shew the Emptiness of that vain imaginary Thing (as they please to term it) which we call *Reputation*.

This however seems to be a great Mistake: For, if we consider the strong Aversion to Shame, which the Author of our Nature has implanted in us, as a Guard against Sin; the warm Resentments we feel, and the large Demands we make upon having our Reputation, at never so great a Distance, attacked: If we consider the high Price, which both *human* and *divine* Laws set upon it; the *one*, making the Penalty of Slander rise in Proportion to the Person that is injured; and the *other* ranking *Slanders* and *Backbiters* among the Number of those, *that shall not inherit the Kingdom of God*: If we consider the Christian Perfection of speaking well of those, that speak ill of us, and of suffering Reproach patiently, when we are reviled by Men for keeping a good Conscience towards God; neither of which could be of any Value, if Calumny and Reproach were not evil in themselves: Or lastly, if we consider, that the main Spring of those laudable Actions, by which the *Worthies* of the Heathen World both signified themselves, and adorned the Ages wherein they

they lived, was no other than the Desire of Glory, and just Commendation; we cannot but be concluded by the Royal Preacher's Opinion, that *a good Name is better than precious Ointment*: But then, to go along with him in the *Metaphor*, we must subscribe likewise to this other Observation, that *as dead Flies cause the Ointment of the Apothecary to send forth a stinking Savour; so doth a little Folly him, that is in Reputation for Wisdom and Honour*.

But it is not our own Reputation only, but the Salvation likewise of our Neighbour's Soul, that is concerned in this Affair. Were we indeed required only to *work out our own Salvation*, without any Regard to that of our Brethren, there would be less Occasion for all this Circumspection in us. Upon this Supposition, we might do every Thing that appeared fit and reasonable to us, without putting ourselves to any Pain about the Construction, which others may pass upon it: But when we are so frequently told, that other Mens Safety depends upon our Conduct, and that therefore we ought to exert our utmost Power to do every Thing that may advance it, and watch, with all possible Care, against doing any Thing, that in the least may hinder it; there hence arises a Duty and Obligation to guard our Actions against the Mischief and Prejudice they may possibly do, by any slight Shew and *Appearance of Evil*.

Under the Law of Moses it is provided, that, *if any Man shall open a Pit, or if any Man shall dig a Pit, and not cover it, and an Ox or an Ass fall therein, the Owner of the Pit shall make it good*. Now, most of these Laws, as the Apostle intimates, had a *figurative*, as well as a *literal* Sense in them; and therefore this in particular may well be supposed to denote, that, as a Jew, when he sunk a Pit for the Service of his House or Ground, for Fear his Neighbour's Beast should fall into it,

and be drowned, was bound by the Law to provide a sufficient Cover for it; so we, when we enter upon any Action, in itself innocent, and fit to be done, should do it in such a Manner, and so cover it against the Suspicions of Evil, that it may not, through our Default, be an Occasion of our Brother's Ruin. But we need not have Recourse to Allegories to find out a Duty, which is delivered in the express Letter of the Gospel. *St Paul*, in his Epistles, very often and very largely insists upon the Obligation, which all Christians are under, to abridge their Liberty in Things, otherwise indifferent, for Fear of offending or scandalising their weaker Brethren. *Take Heed*, says he to the *Corinthians*, lest, by any Means, this Liberty of yours become a Stumbling-block to those that are weak. For if any Man see thee, which hast Knowledge, sit at Meat in the Idol's Temple, shall not the Conscience of him, which is weak, be emboldened to eat those Things, which are offered to Idols? And through thy Knowledge shall thy weak Brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when ye sin so against the Brethren, and wound their Conscience, ye sin against Christ.

This is a Passage so very full, that we need go no farther for Conviction: Only, for our better understanding it, it may not be amiss to observe, that, in relation to the Sacrifices here spoken of, some Part of them was eaten in the Idol's Temple; which being an Act of religious Worship and Communion with the Idol, as our eating the Bread in the Sacrament is a Communion with Christ, the Apostle utterly disallows, as absolutely unlawful; but the Remainder of them, which fell to the Priest's Share, and they, having no Use for, sold to those, who afterwards exposed it to Sale, promiscuously among other Meats, upon the Shambles: This the Apostle allows might lawfully be bought, and eat in any private House, without the least

least Sin; only with this Caution, that whereas there were some *Converts*, who well understood, that Meat could have no defiling Quality imprinted upon it by its *Consecration* to an Idol, and others, on the contrary, who, having not so much Knowledge, supposed that the Consecration left such a polluting Quality upon it as certainly defiled the Eater; the *former* Sort might innocently and freely eat such Meats in private Families, provided it was not before those of the latter Sort, who, through Weakness, having an Opinion of the Unlawfulness of such Meats, might nevertheless be induced to use the same Liberty, tho' their Consciences, in the mean Time, having quite another Judgment in this Matter, esteemed the eating them little better than *Idolatry*. Now the Argument, whereby the Apostle abridges the Liberty of the former Sort of Converts, in Condescension to the latter, proceeds upon the Strength of this Assertion—That the Lawfulness of Mens Actions depends, not solely, either upon the Lawfulness of the Subject-Matter, nor yet upon the Conscience of the Doers of them, considered in itself, but as considered with Reference to the Consciences of *others*, to whom, by the Law of *Charity*, they are bound so to behave themselves, as by none of their Actions to give them Occasion of Sin. And therefore the Apostle concludes with this noble Resolution, as supposing it his own Case; *If Meat make my Brother to offend, I will eat no Flesh, while the World standeth, lest I make my Brother to offend.*

II. Since the *Appearance of Evil* then, even in the most indifferent Actions, may prove prejudicial both to our own Reputation, and the Salvation of our Neighbour's Soul, it cannot but be of Use to insert a Direction or two, how we may happily avoid it: And, to this Purpose, it must be allowed, 1. That the Foundation of a fair Appearance

pearance in the World must be primarily laid in the inward Sincerity of the Heart: For the shortest, and safest, and perhaps the only Way to appear Good and Virtuous, is really to be such, as we desire to appear. *If we first seek the Kingdom of God, and his Righteousness*, we have a sure Gospel-Promise, that all other Things, which we want, the Necessaries and Comforts of Life, shall be super-added to us; and, in like Manner, if we make it our principal Aim to approve ourselves in the Sight of God, we may securely depend upon his Goodness, that *he*, who can turn the Hearts of Men as he pleases, will dispose them to think well of us, and to judge favourably and tenderly of all our Actions. Nay, this will follow in the Way of natural Consequence: For when once Integrity, and an uniform Practice of Virtue, founded upon religious Principles, have established our Character, and procured us a good Esteem in the World, this Reputation will be the best Guard against unkind Suspicions, and severe Censures. What is *doubtful* in our Carriage, and admits of several Interpretations, will be construed in *Analogy* to what was, without Controversy, worthy of Praise: An Esteem for our Persons, gained by what we have done *confessedly well*, will incline Men to judge the best of those Actions, which are not *manifestly evil*; and those, who have entertained a favourable Opinion of us, for our former good Life, will be desirous to continue it, to shew the Steadiness of their own Judgment, as well as Esteem and Affection for us.

And as an honest Sincerity of Heart, and Integrity of Mind, is the best Way to secure our Actions from an *evil Appearance*; so, 2. The Apostle has laid it down as a certain Rule, that Prudence and Circumspection in our outward Behaviour is the best Guard of Integrity, and the greatest Ornament of Virtue: See, therefore, (says he to the

Ephesians) that ye walk circumspectly, not as Fools, who unnecessarily expose themselves to Danger, to being ill used, or evil-spoken of; but as wise, who are careful to secure their Interest, and their good Name, where they can shelter themselves from Suffering, and from Disgrace, by behaving themselves with Discretion: And, in like Manner, to the *Colossians*, walk in Wisdom toward them that are without, i. e. towards the Adversaries of your Religion, who will be careful to watch all your Steps, and lay hold on any imprudent, any indiscreet, any unwary Carriage, whereby they may cast a Blemish upon you, and your holy Profession: And, upon this Account, the good Advice, which our Saviour, in his Time, gave his Apostles, is very applicable, in this ill-natured and insidious World, to all Christians, in all Ages, *Behold, I send you forth as Sheep in the Midst of Wolves, be ye therefore wise as Serpents, and harmless as Doves.*

We must observe farther, that as there is scarce any one Vice, which does not borrow the Features of some Virtue, nor any Virtue, which, to a transient and careless View, may not, perhaps, seem to have the Colour of some Vice; and as it is this *Likeness*, which gives Room to the erroneous Judgment of the *Ignorant*, or the wilful Misrepresentations of the *Malicious*: If ever therefore we would secure our *innocent*, and even *commendable* Actions, from an *evil Appearance*, we must be very diligent to *distinguish* them from those particular Vices, for which they may chance to be mistaken.

Thus, for Instance, Devotion and Hypocrisy, Zeal and Passion, Moderation and Lukewarmness, Prudence and Cunning, &c. have some *Lineaments*, so much resembling each other, and, by being so frequently called by each other's Names, are so liable to be taken the one for the other, that, unless we attend carefully to these particular Circumstances,

stances, in which they differ, and study to express these distinct Characters in our Practice, the World must be much better-natured, than we have Reason to expect it is, *if our Good be not evil-spoken of.*

Would a truly *devout* Person then not be suspected of *Hypocrisy* : In his *publick* Devotions, he must take Care, that there be nothing singular or affected ; that, in his Countenance, in his Gestures, in his Voice, there be no Air or Appearance of Ostentation ; and, in his *private* Devotions, he must strictly attend to our blessed Saviour's Direction ; *When thou prayest, enter into thy Closet, shut thy Door, and, when thou hast shut thy Door, pray to thy Father, which is in Secret ; and thy Father, which seeth in Secret, shall reward thee openly.* Would a *zealous* Person not be looked upon as *passionate* : He must take strict Care, that his Zeal be guided with Knowledge, and tempered with Charity ; that it be more conversant about Things, than about Persons ; bear a due Proportion to the Objects that employ it ; and, above all, that it be not so intemperate and outrageous, as either to eat himself up, or put him upon devouring his Christian Brethren. In like Manner, would a *moderate* Person avoid the Imputation of being *Lake-warm* : He must take Care to be moderate only in such Things, wherein there is Danger of Excess ; but, in those Things, wherein it is laudable to excel, he must not affect *Moderation*. About Things, in their own Nature *indifferent*, he may be indifferent too, or not very much concerned ; but it would badly become him to be thought a *moderate Lover* of Piety and Virtue, of Peace and good Order ; one, that has a moderate Concern for the Laws and Liberties of his Country, or for the Welfare and Prosperity of his Church.

These Instances, without proceeding any farther, are sufficient to shew us, that, how resem-

blat soever Virtue and Vice may be, there are certain Notes and Characters, whereby we may distinguish them, not only in our Thoughts, but in our Practice; and that, therefore, to avoid the *Appearance of Evil*, it is highly expedient and necessary, that we endeavour to express this Difference in the whole Conduct of our Lives, as fully, and significantly as we possibly can; but, if all this will not do to conciliate the good Opinion of a perverse World, the Apostle's Advice will then come in to our Comfort and Relief: *Sanctify the Lord in your Hearts, and be always ready to give an Answer to every Man, that asketh you a Reason of the Hope that is in you, with Meekness and Fear: Having a good Conscience, that, whereas they speak Evil of you, as of Evil-doers, they may be ashamed, that falsely accuse your good Conversation in Christ; and others, by your good Works, which they behold, may glorify God in the Day of Visitation.*

Of the Desire of Righteousness.

BLESS'D are they which do hunger and thirst after Righteousness, for they shall be filled, is one of the happy Sentences of our Saviour's Sermon upon the Mount, and may be a proper Argument for the Conclusion of this Work. By *Righteousness* here, we are to understand the Whole Duty of Man, in all Relations and Capacities; or that Integrity of Obedience, and universal Regard to all God's Commandments, which those, that endeavour to serve him in Sincerity and Truth, are ready, on all Occasions, to express, both in their Temper of Mind, and outward Behaviour: And to hunger and thirst after this Righteousness implies an ardent and intense Desire of it; such a Desire, as will not be satisfied without it; such a Desire, as puts Men upon trying all possible Means, and using

using their utmost Endeavours to attain it. 'Tis an earnest Appetite and Intention of Mind to grow in Grace, and in the Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; to follow his Example, and to be counted worthy of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light. 'Tis a sincere Endeavour to mortify all the Remains of Sin in us, to get the perfect Mastery of our Affections and Passions, and to bring them under an intire Subjection to the Law of God; to increase daily in all Christian Virtues; and to walk in every Thing, as it becomes the Professors of a most holy Religion. 'Tis a fervent Breathing after greater Degrees of Charity, Humility, Patience, and all other Graces; forgetting those Things, that are behind, the Pitch of Goodness we have already attained; and reaching forth unto those Things, that are before, that Perfection in Piety and Virtue, which alone can satisfy a generous Christian; and pressing towards the Mark of the Prize of the high Calling of God in Christ Jesus: A Weaning our Hearts from the World, and fixing them upon that happy State, where we shall sin no more, but be established for ever in consummate Righteousness. In short, 'tis such an eager and importunate, such a sincere and efficacious Desire for all this, as the Man, who is almost famished with Hunger, and parched up with Drought, has for that Meat and Drink, with which, if he be not soon supplied, he knows he must unavoidably perish.

This is the full Force of the Metaphor, and proper Import of the Duty; and the Reward annexed to it, though comprized in these few Words, *they shall be filled*, is, in itself, of an adequate Extent. For, 1. *They shall be filled* with the Righteousness they desire. 2. *They shall be filled* with Comfort and Satisfaction of Mind here; and, 3. *They shall be filled* with all imaginable Happiness hereafter.

1. The great Design of God, from the Beginning of the World, was, that all Mankind might serve him in Holiness and Righteousness, and be accordingly rewarded by him; and, to effect this, he, in his infinite Wisdom, has contrived many wonderful Ways. He has imprinted the Law of Righteousness upon the Hearts and Consciences of Men; he hath bound it up with their Reason and Understanding; he hath sent his Son into the World to promote the Practice of it, both by his Instruction and Example; by his Holy Spirit he begins the good Work, where it is not, and cherishes it, where it is begun; and, in short, he hath omitted no Methods of engaging us; all that Promises and Threatenings, that kind Intreaties and vehement Expostulations can do, he hath not left unattempted; and, after all this, it would be incongruous to think, that he will refuse the Gift of Righteousness and Sanctification to such, as heartily desire and endeavour it. We cannot say so with Respect to the Blessings of this present Life: *The Race*, as the wise Man observes, *is not always to the Swift, nor the Battle to the Strong, nor Bread to the Wise, nor Riches to Men of Understanding, nor yet Favour to Men of Skill; but Time and Chance happen to them all.* Though Art and Industry do naturally tend to make Men rich, yet they are often blasted in the Event. Experience is a standing Evidence of this, that neither Fraud nor Honesty, Righteousness nor Unrighteousness, the most likely Endeavours, nor the most diligent Application can effectually command the Things of this World: But it is not so with the Blessings that are better worth enjoying. There is no Defeat in the Endeavours after *Righteousness*. A Man cannot be disappointed, who labours to be *virtuous*. The Love and Desire of the Thing does naturally enforce the *Practice*, and the Practice brings

brings on the *Habit*, and the *Habit* is continually strengthened by the *Influence* of God's Holy Spirit, till it be finally confirmed and rewarded in *Glory*. God may refuse, and refuse, in Kindness, to hear the Prayers even of a good Man, when he prays for *temporal* Blessings; but he never refuses (at least he never does it in Mercy) to grant Requests for *Spiritual*; upon which Presumption it is, that *Solomon* founds this Exhortation: *If thou criest after Knowledge, and liftest up thy Voice for Understanding; if thou seekest her, as Silver, and searchest for her, as for hid Treasures; then shalt thou understand the Fear of the Lord, and find the Knowledge of God; then shalt thou understand Righteousness, and Judgment, and Equity, and every good Path.*

2. He shall be filled with Comfort and Satisfaction here. The Progress and Proficiency he makes in the Ways of *Righteousness* will fill him with a spiritual Joy, far exceeding the Pleasure, which any Thing else in this World can afford. For God has so adapted Religion to the Mind of Man, that, though there be *Labour* in the Undertaking, yet there is always a *Relish* that goes along with it. The conquering of an evil Habit, or a strong Temptation, is like the conquering of a powerful Enemy, difficult to perform, but what, when accomplished, fills him with mighty Joy and Triumph. Every Grace he obtains, every sinful Inclination he subdues, every good Action he performs, is no less, than a new Conveyance to him of eternal Glory, a new Assurance of his Right and Title; and this, being what is congenial to his Soul, must be intirely agreeable to all his Faculties. But we have not Time to follow the righteous Man through all the pleasurable Perceptions of his Life; and shall therefore chuse to consider him only, as he is drawing to the Period of it: When, if ever, he will rightly understand the inestimable

estimable Price of a quiet Conscience, of a satisfied Mind, and of an Hope full of Glory and Immortality : When, if ever, he will find That, which was always a *continual Feast*, then a sovereign *Cordial*, and Food of Angels ; for never certainly is Peace and Comfort more seasonable, than at this Instant.

What an unspeakable Satisfaction then must it be to a dying Man, when, if he looks *backward*, he sees a Life well spent ; if *forward*, he has before him a bright Prospect of immortal Glory. When he can say, with King *Hezekiah*, *Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I walked before thee in Truth, and with a perfect Heart* ; or, with the great Apostle, even when within View of his Dissolution, *I have fought a good Fight, I have finished my Course, I have kept the Faith ; henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of Righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that Day*. It must needs, I say, be an unspeakable and inconceivable Satisfaction for a Man in his last Hour, when all are sad about him, and concerned for him ; then to consider, that there is a better State, and that he has a Title to it ; that, when his *earthly Tabernacle shall be dissolved*, he has a *Building with God, an House not made with Hands, eternal in the Heavens* ; that, when he shall cease to converse with Men, he shall dwell with God, and converse with Angels ; in a Word, that he is to leave nothing but Vanities and Shadows behind him, and that he has the solid and real Happiness of a whole Eternity before him. What a mild and unterrifying Thing is Death to such a Man as this, and with what Serenity and Chearfulness does he entertain its Summons ! He can smile in the Physician's Face, when he hears him pronounce his Sickness desperate ; can receive his Sentence without Trembling, and, if his Senses hold out

so long, can hear even his *Passing-Bell* without Disturbance. So true is that of the Prophet, *the Work of Righteousness shall be Peace, and the Effect of Righteousness, Quietness, and Assurance for ever.*

3. They shall be filled with all imaginable Happiness hereafter. For when all their Sins shall be pardoned, and done away; when their Righteousness shall be advanced to a full Strength and Perfection; when they shall awake up after the Likeness of God, and, with joyful Acclamations, be conducted into his glorious Presence; so far shall their Happiness be from falling short of their present Expectation, that it will far exceed, not only what Eye hath seen, or Ear heard, but every Thing, that can now enter into the Heart of Man to conceive: For they shall be before the Throne of God, and be, that sitteth on the Throne, shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more: The Lamb, which is in the Midst of the Throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living Fountains of Waters; and God, who is their Portion and their Inheritance, in whose Presence there is Fulness of Joy, and at whose Right-hand there are Pleasures for evermore, shall wipe away all Tears from their Eyes.

Finally then, my Brethren, since Godliness has the Promises both of this Life, and of that which is to come, we cannot conclude, better, than with St Paul's Advice to the Philippians; *whatsoever Things are true, whatsoever Things are honest, whatsoever Things are pure, whatsoever Things are lovely, whatsoever Things are of good Report; if there be any Virtue, if there be any Praise, think on these Things, and the God of Peace shall be with you.*

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